

The *Trapeza* in Cenobitic Monasteries: Architectural and Spiritual Contexts

SVETLANA POPOVIĆ

The spiritual life of monasticism found material expression in a spatial structure known as the monastery. The concept of this establishment thus has many layers of meanings in which the architectural and spatial layouts are prominent. There is a very close relationship between the monastic way of life and its architectural setting. Building forms and their spatial arrangement often have symbolic meaning, sometimes not immediately recognizable. The shaping of the monastery of the eastern Christian world evolved through the centuries, from its beginnings in the fourth century through the medieval epoch. The cenobitic community—the *koinobion*—where a group of monks followed a communal form of life was established as early as the fourth century.¹ Three prominent physical features characterized a *koinobion*: the main church, the enclosure wall, and the refectory, referred to as the *trapeza* in the Greek sources.² If one considers all of the elements involved in establishing a *koinobion* monastery, one realizes that its spatial layout must have been determined at the time the main church was founded. The entire area was dedicated to a particular saint, and in this context the act of founding the church, where prayers were conducted day and night, points to an established ritual performed within a defined and secured area. Planning the complex at an early stage did not mean that the monastery's walled enclosure was complete from the beginning; construction could continue alongside the building of the church.

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¹From the voluminous bibliography on early monasticism, I list here only the most recent publications in which most of the older relevant literature has been cited: *Pachomian Koinonia*, ed. A. Veilleux, 3 vols. (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1980–82); C. A. Frazee, "Anatolian Asceticism in the Fourth Century: Eustathius of Sebastea and Basil of Caesarea," *CHR* 66 (1980), 16–33; P. Rousseau, *Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt* (Los Angeles, 1985); A. Papadakis, "Byzantine Monasticism Reconsidered," *BSI* 47–48 (1986–87), 34–46; J. C. O'Neill, "The Origins of Monasticism," in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, ed. R. Williams (Cambridge, 1989), 270–87; J. Binns, "The Distinctiveness of Palestinian Monasticism, 450–550 A.D.," in *Monastic Studies: The Continuity of Tradition*, ed. J. Loades (Bangor, Maine, 1990), 11–20; G. Gould, *The Desert Fathers on Monastic Community* (Oxford, 1993); S. Elm, "Virgins of God": *The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 1994).

²S. Popović, *Krst u krugu: Arhitektura manastira u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji* (Belgrade, 1994), 50–62. On the monastic *trapeza*, cf. Lampe, 1399.

The *koinobion* had several functions that determined its form. Generally speaking, three functional groups of structures can be distinguished: one zone reserved for religious worship, a second zone for dwelling purposes, and a third for economic activity.³ To be sure, the entire *koinobion* monastery was dedicated to religious activity, but in the concrete conditions of daily life the space intended exclusively for worship can be clearly defined. The zone for worship, in which I would include the refectory, was determined by the position of the church building. In most cases a monastic settlement would develop its zone for religious worship over a period of time, increasing the number of religious buildings beyond that in the original concept. These were placed in the free space of the inner courtyard and within the developed area along the enclosure walls. The *koinobion* as an architectural complex was spatially defined by a great outer wall.⁴ This walled enclosure was not merely a physical border dividing the space, but in the minds of contemporaries also symbolized the abode of a saint, a "holy enclosure."⁵ One should bear in mind, however, that this would be the primary spatial concept. Changes or additions to the primary forms could occur over the course of time. Yet the three main features—the enclosure wall, the church, and the refectory—remained constant. This brief description of the physical enclosure of the cenobitic community could be paradigmatic for the entire chronological span surveyed here, from the fourth century to the end of the medieval era. The reason for the continuity of the spatial design is that the monastic way of life was governed by strict rules that did not change substantially for centuries. This does not mean that the monastic rules did not change at all over time; they did. Those changes did not happen at once, however; they developed over a longer period of time, bringing to light new arrangements of monastic settlements. The layout of buildings in the monastery and their architectural relationships interacted closely with the prescribed daily life and ritual performed in the community. This brings us to the question of the position and meaning of the cenobitic refectory within the monastic environment.

It is well known that a meal, or better a communal meal, was very important for the first Christians, whether monks or ordinary believers.⁶ Even the first anchorites, who mortified the flesh for the salvation of their souls, gathered twice a week to eat together with other brethren.⁷ It is also well known that the *agape*—a religious meal performed by the first Christians, with its roots in Judaism—was different from the Eucharist whose liturgical source was the Last Supper.⁸

The *agape* also had its source in the Lord's Supper, but not with the same connotations.⁹ In the early days of monasticism, especially in the period strongly characterized

³Popović, *Krst*, 80ff; eadem, *The Architectural Iconography of the Late Byzantine Monastery* (Toronto, 1997), 1–6, 13–17.

⁴Cf. H. G. Evelyn-White, *The Monasteries of the Wādi 'N Natrun*, III (New York, 1933), 5; H. Torp, "Murs d'enceinte des monastères coptes primitifs et couvents-forteresses," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome* 76 (1964), 173–200; S. Popović, "Monastery Entrances around the Year 1200," in *Studienica et l'art byzantin autour de l'année 1200* (Belgrade, 1988), 153–69.

⁵*The Life of Pachomius (Vita Prima Graeca)*, ed. A. N. Athanassakis (Missoula, Mont., 1975), 81.1.

⁶Cf. G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (Westminster, 1945), 82ff; W. A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians* (New Haven, Conn.-London, 1983), 157ff.

⁷Cf. *Jean Cassien: Institutions cénobitiques*, ed. J. C. Guy (Paris, 1965), V, 234.26.

⁸Cf. Dix, *Shape of the Liturgy*, 19, 48, 82ff.

⁹*Ibid.*, 89.

by anchoritism, the hermits assembled twice a week in the communal church for the liturgy; a communal meal that derived from the *agape* always followed the divine services. Special dietary prescriptions for the anchorites as well as for cenobitic monks derived from the original Early Christian custom of using certain foods for religious purposes.¹⁰ Bearing in mind all these facts, it seems logical to expect that the cenobitic refectory would have been a building with a special status within the monastery.

THE REFECTORIES OF EGYPT AND SYRIA-PALESTINE

In terms of its spatial disposition in the monastic complex, the refectory was always in the vicinity of the church. This relationship can be traced to the very beginnings of monasticism in Egypt and Palestine. One of the earliest prominent monks, Pachomius, the founder of the Egyptian *koinobia*, left his Rules governing all of the Egyptian cenobitic monasteries, which constituted an assembly of all Pachomian communities.¹¹ Among the regulations was a refectory rule that prescribed conduct during the monks' common meal.¹² After the synaxis concluded in the church, the brothers would go to the refectory. They would sit in order at their appointed places while a special seat was provided for the father superior. Conversation was prohibited during the meal, and the food was served when a signal sounded. In the Pachomian *koinobia* of Egypt, it was common to locate the refectory next to the church. At Anba Bishoi and Deir es Suryani it was situated west of the main church, from which it was separated by a corridor. At Deir el Baramus the refectory was located to the southwest, and at St. Antony it was northwest of the old church.¹³

The monastery of Anba Bishoi was founded in the fourth century in the time of Macarius the Great.¹⁴ The monastery was rebuilt many times during its centuries of existence, while its refectory bears traces of renovation from the eleventh century.¹⁵ The refectory was located west of the church; its main entrance was opposite its central western door (Fig. 1a). In architectural plan, it was an elongated narrow hall consisting of six bays structurally divided by arches, each of them separately vaulted. The central bay had a quadripartite vault. Each of the two side bays was covered by a low dome, while the northernmost was barrel vaulted (Fig. 1b). The broad elongated masonry table was placed centrally along the longitudinal axis of the building. The refectory table terminated in a three-quarter circle at its northern end. In the southernmost bay once stood a lectern, used for reading the psalms and prayers during the meal.

In the monastery of Deir es Suryani, founded in the first half of the sixth century, the refectory was also located on the west side of the church.¹⁶ The main entrances to the dining hall and to the church building faced each other. The architectural articulation of the refectory seems to have been changed from its original plan by shortening the building at its west end (Fig. 2a). A masonry table occupied the central position in the hall,

¹⁰Cf. E. Jeanselme, "La régime alimentaire des anachorètes et des moines byzantins," in *2e Congrès d'Histoire de la Médecine* (Évreux, 1922), 1–28.

¹¹Cf. note 1 above.

¹²Cf. *Pachomian Koinonia*, ed. Veilleux, II, 150.28–34, 151.35–37.

¹³Cf. C. Walters, *Monastic Archaeology in Egypt* (Warminster, 1974), 99–102.

¹⁴Cf. Evelyn-White, *Monasteries*, 133.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 163.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 170.

and a stone lectern was placed at the east end. All three remaining bays were domed. The only remnants of fresco decoration are the eight painted crosses found on the lectern.¹⁷ The building has been dated to the ninth century.¹⁸ Of a similar architectural plan, and also dating to the ninth century, is the refectory in the monastery of Deir el Baramus.¹⁹ Here the dining hall was situated next to the southwest side of the main church (Fig. 2b). The architectural plan of the building and its structural features lead to the conclusion that some alterations must have occurred over the course of time. The elongated rectangular hall consisted of three domed bays, of which the westernmost is divided by an arch. A stone lectern was placed in the west bay, and a long masonry table runs along the longitudinal axis of the building.

At the St. Symeon monastery, or Anba Hadra, in Aswan, the refectory was located on the upper terrace of the monastery where the *kasr* (monastic tower) was located.²⁰ The appearance of *kasrs* as strongholds can be traced back to the end of the fourth century, and definitely to the beginning of the fifth century in Egypt.²¹ The unusual position of the dining hall, which is connected with the main monastic tower instead of with the church, could be explained in the broader context of monastic development. It is well known that St. Symeon's monastery, built in the eighth century, suffered from major alterations and rebuilding in the tenth century and later.²² These towers were multipurpose in their function as well as in their meaning. In Egyptian monasteries they had two or three stories containing cells, rooms for economic activity, a treasury with a library, lodgings for individuals of special distinction, and a chapel on the uppermost level, usually dedicated to the archangel Michael.²³ The tower functioned as a refuge in case of a siege, and in these circumstances it also served as a small monastery within the broader monastic complex. But the tower had yet another function in the everyday life of the community. There are numerous examples of towers in Egypt and throughout the regions of Palestine and Syria that were used as places of seclusion for prominent monks and founders of communities.²⁴ In that sense the refectory at the St. Symeon monastery that was attached to the tower, or incorporated in the *kasr* that functioned as an independent monastic unit with its chapel, had its usual function, position, and meaning. The dining hall there had an elongated rectangular plan consisting of ten vaulted bays, probably once domed. The axially placed row of four columns, together with transverse arches linking columns with the walls, formed each of the bays (Fig. 3a, b). Remains of eight circular masonry constructions resembling refectory tables are still visible on the refectory floor.

It is important to analyze the position of these Egyptian monastic refectories within the monastic complex. They were set in close relation to the monastic church, most often attached to its western side, with the main entrances to the church and the refectory

¹⁷G. J. Chester, "Notes on the Coptic Days of the Wady Natrûn and on Dayr Antonios in the Eastern Desert," *AJ* 30 (1873), 109; Evelyn-White, *Monasteries*, 210.

¹⁸Evelyn-White, *Monasteries*, 244.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 244–45.

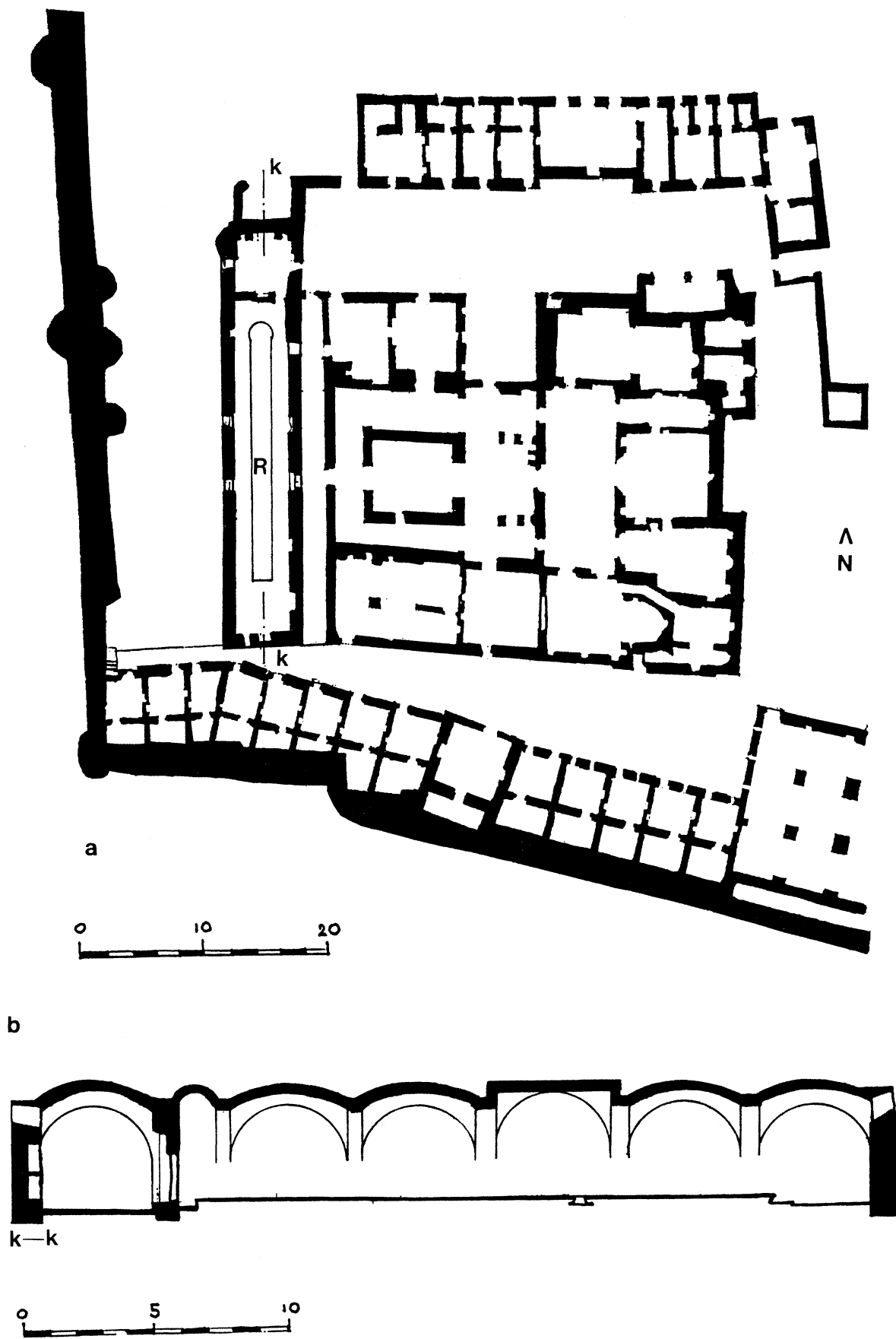
²⁰U. Monneret de Villard, *Il monastero di S. Simeone presso Aswân*, I (Milan, 1927).

²¹On the tower of the *skete* from 444 A.D., cf. J.-C. Guy, *Les Apophthegmes des pères* (Paris, 1993), 74.

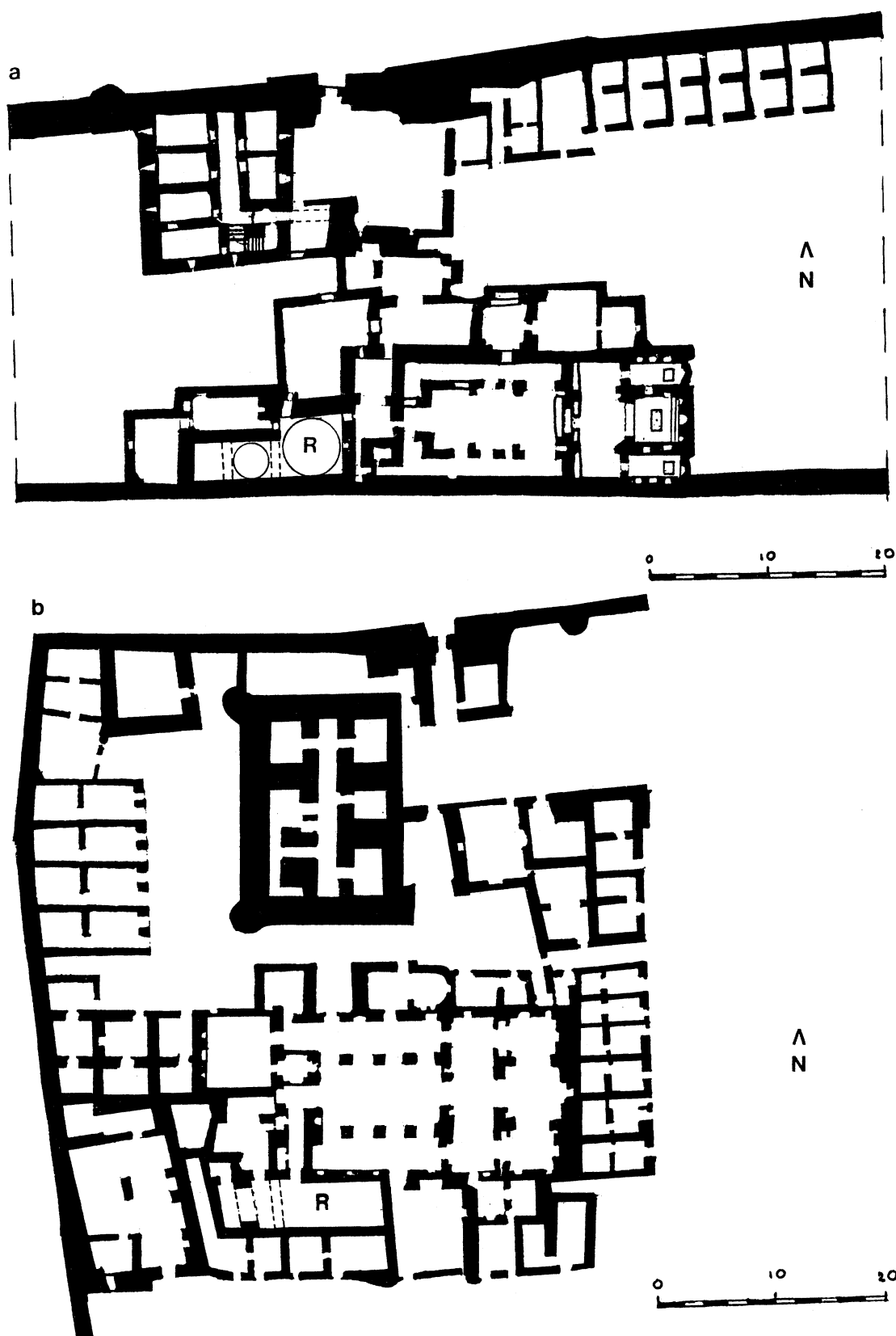
²²Monneret de Villard, *S. Simeone*, 156ff; Walters, *Monastic Archaeology*, 241.

²³Walters, *Monastic Archaeology*, 86–99.

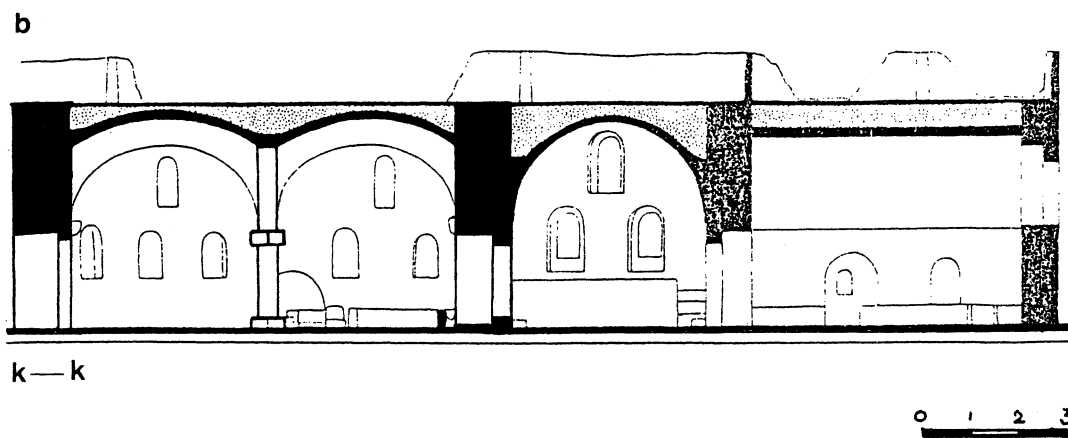
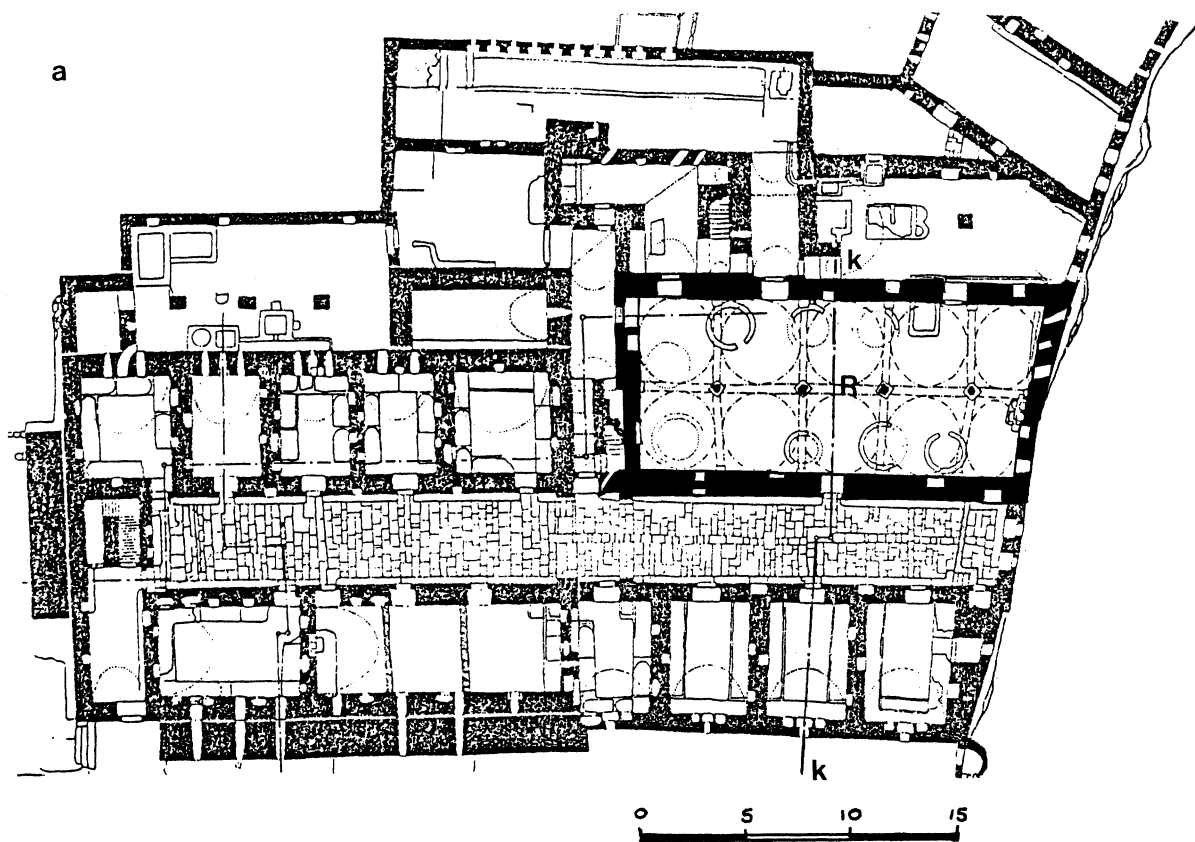
²⁴Cf. S. Popović, "Elevated Chapels: The Monastery Tower and Its Meaning," *BSCAbstr* 19 (1993), 7–8.



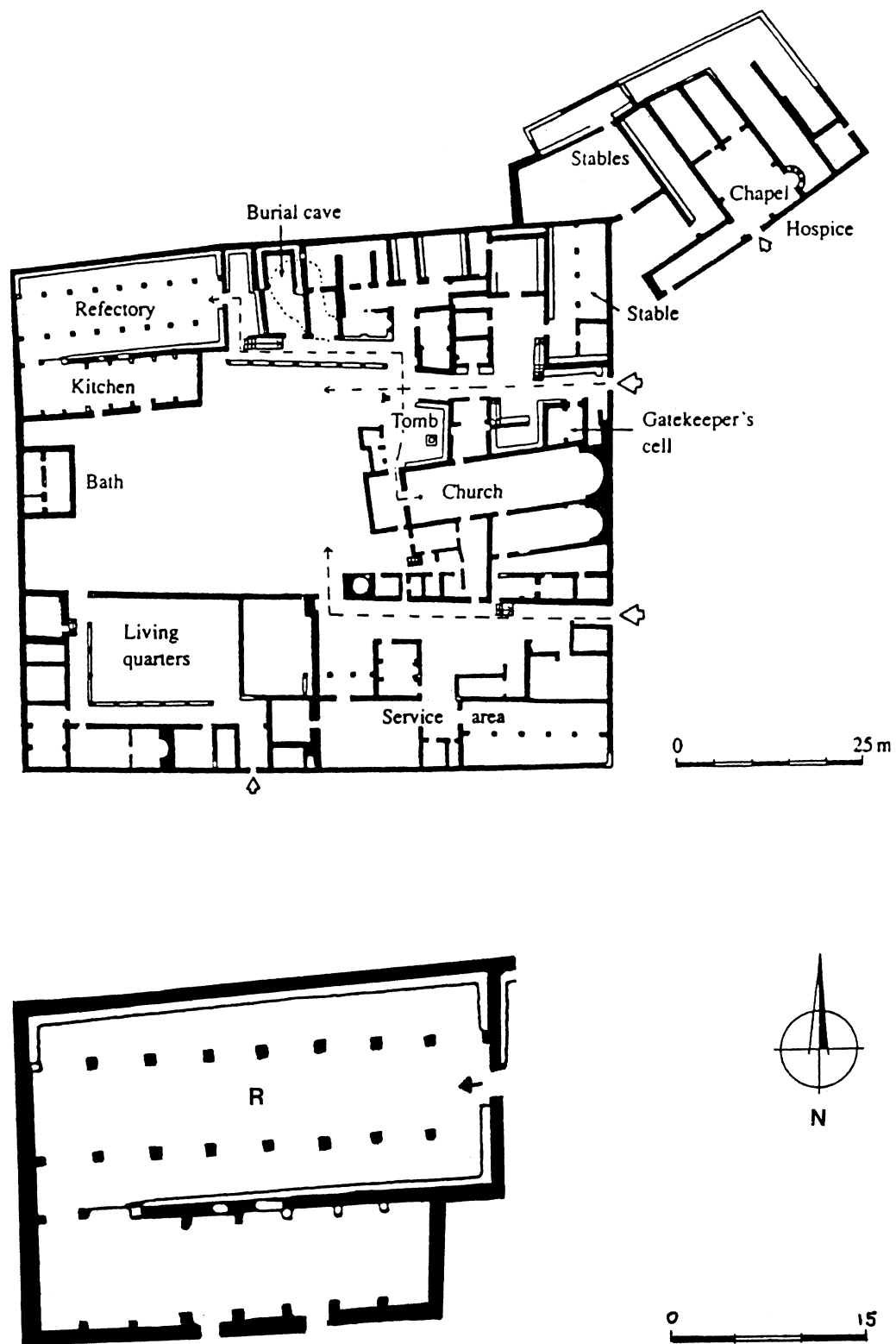
1 Anba Bishoi monastery, Wadi Natrun: (a) plan; (b) refectory cross-section (after Evelyn-White, *Monasteries*, pl. xxxvii)



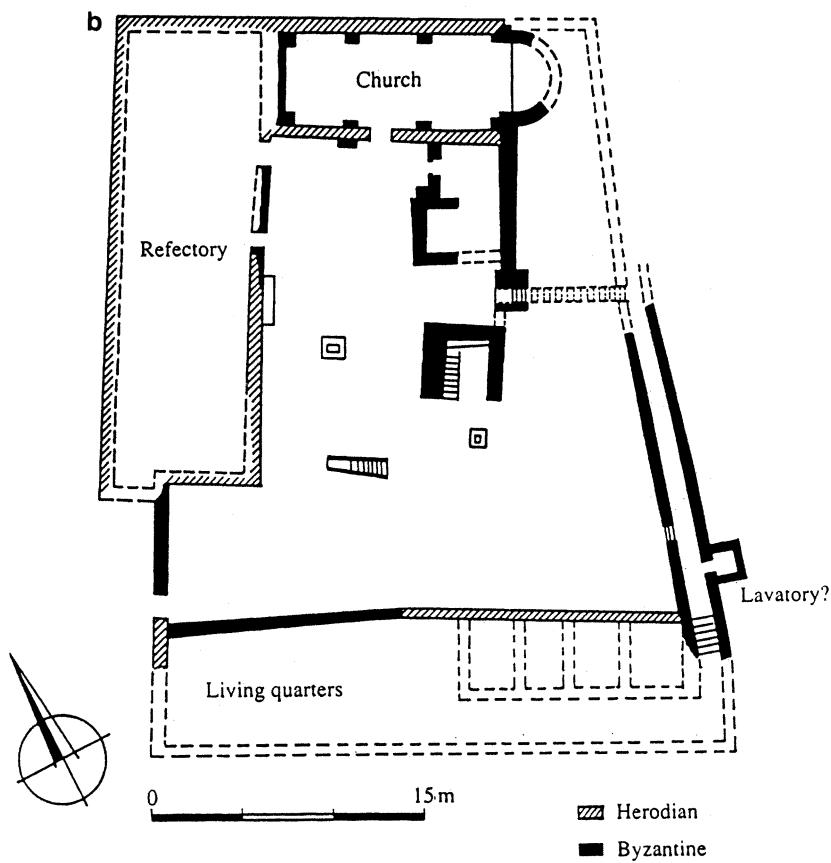
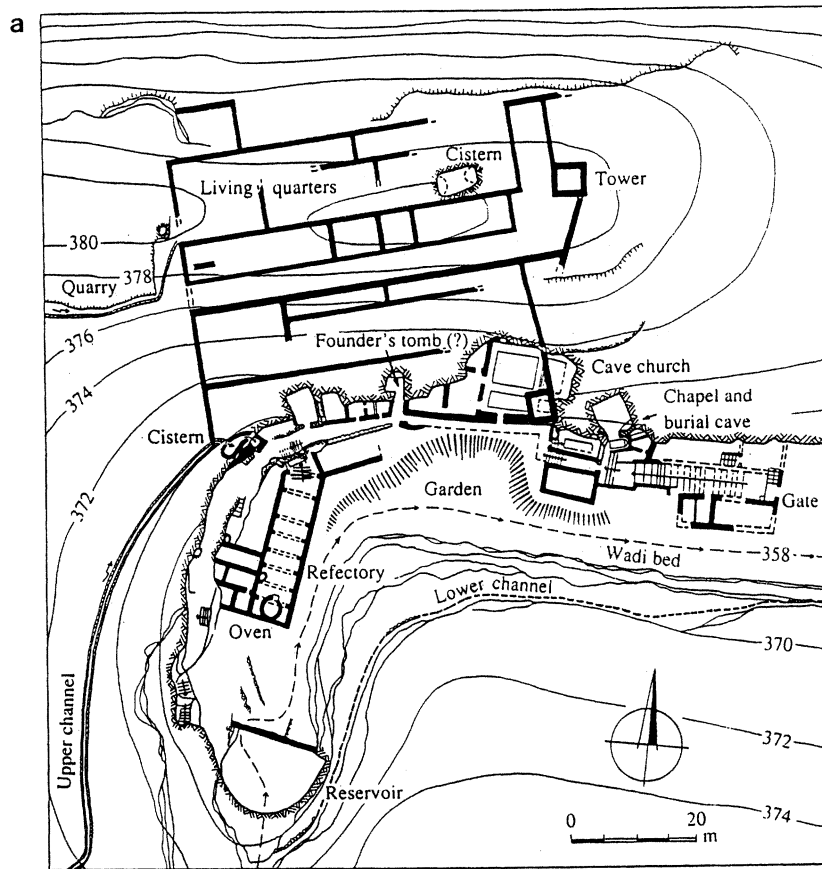
2 (a) Deir es Suryani monastery, plan; (b) Deir el Baramus monastery, plan (after Evelyn-White, *Monasteries*, pls. L and LXXX)



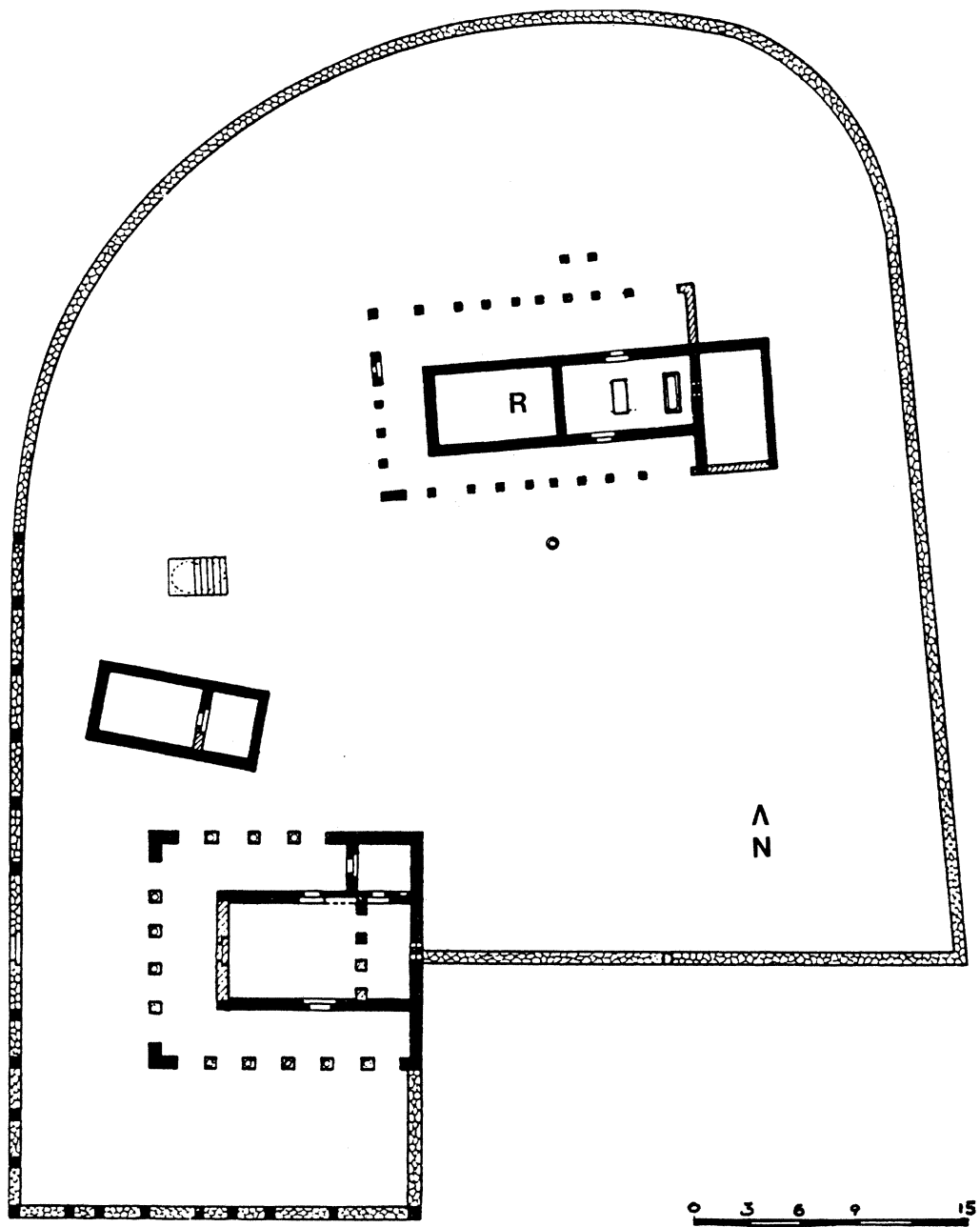
3 St. Symeon monastery: (a) plan; (b) refectory cross-section (after Monneret de Villard, *S. Simeone*, fig. 114)



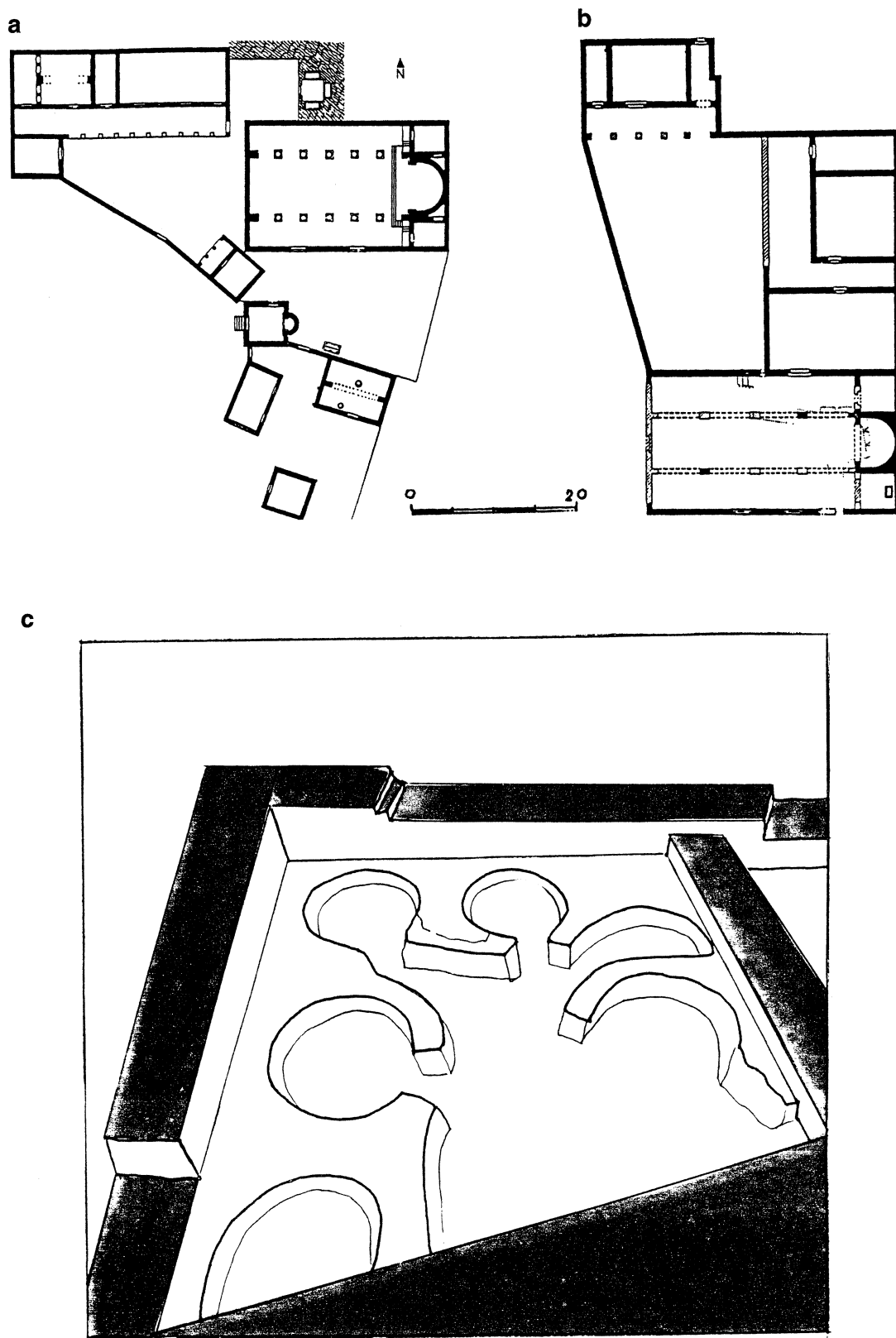
4 Monastery of Martyrius, plan (*top*) and refectory (*bottom*) (after Hirschfeld, *Desert Monasteries*, fig. 21)



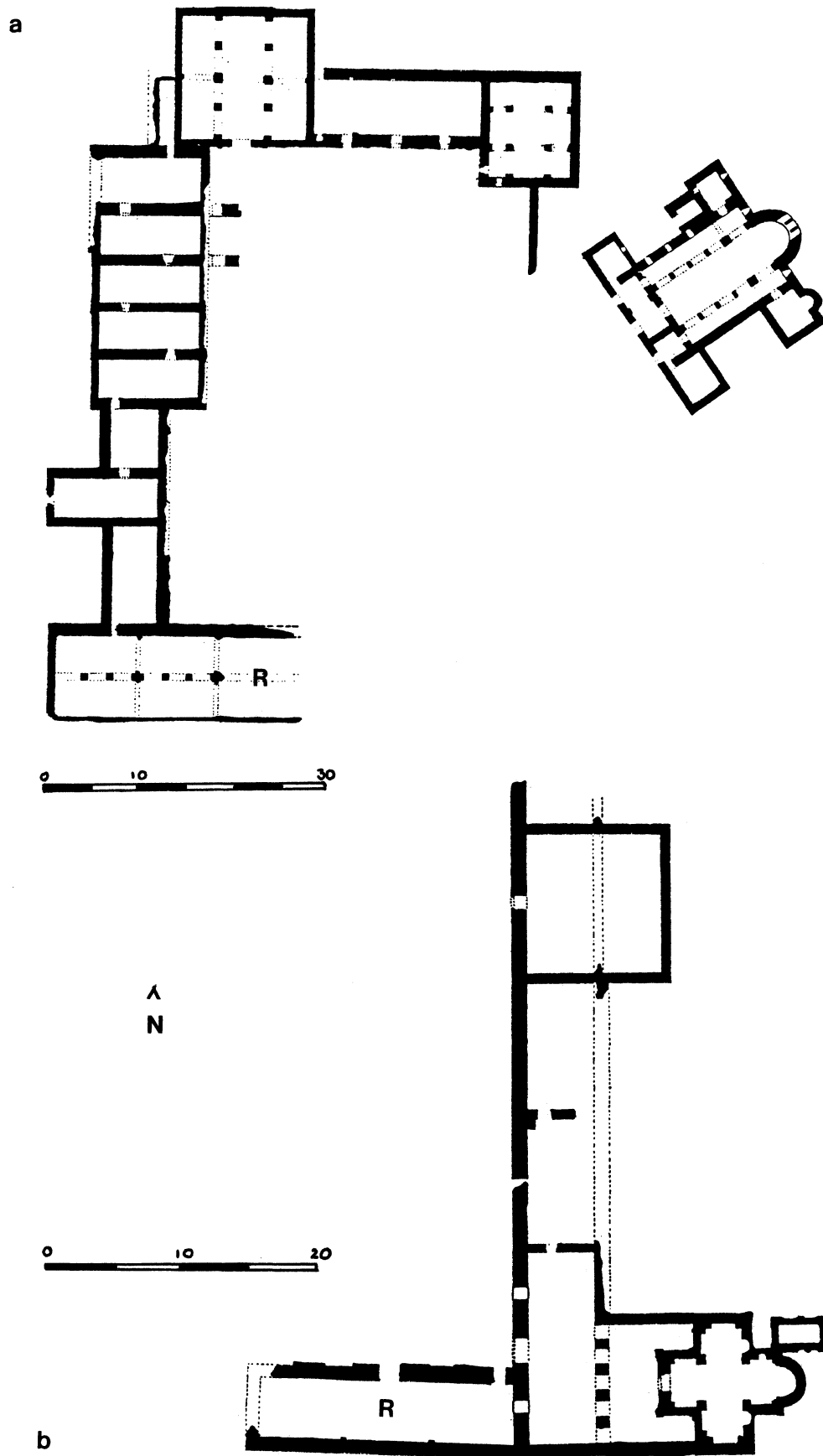
5 (a) Khirbet ed Deir monastery, plan; (b) monastery of Castellion, plan (after Hirschfeld, *Desert Monasteries*, figs. 18, 28)



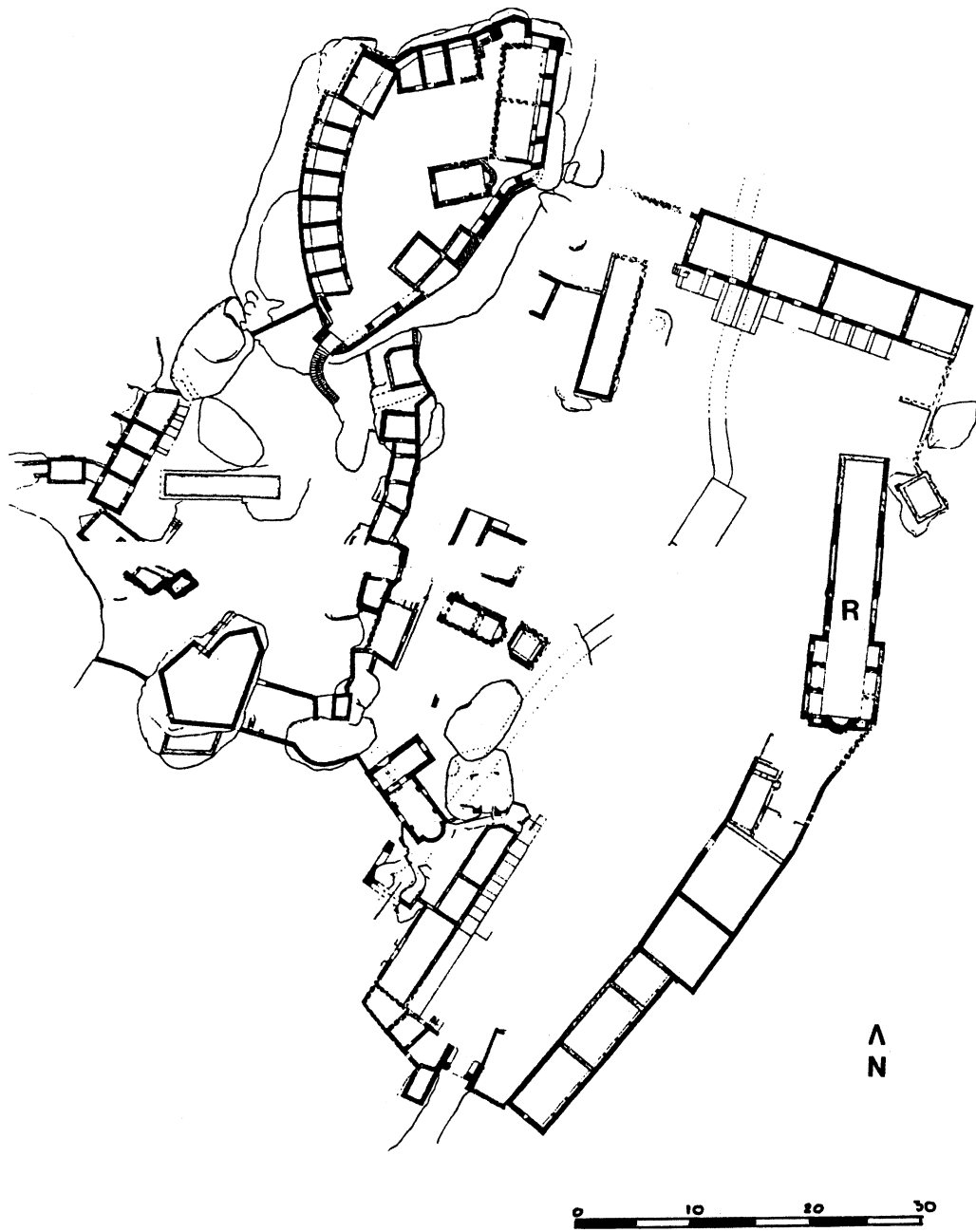
6 Kefr Fenche monastery, plan (after Peña, Castellana, and Fernández, *Les cénobites syriens*, fig. 27)



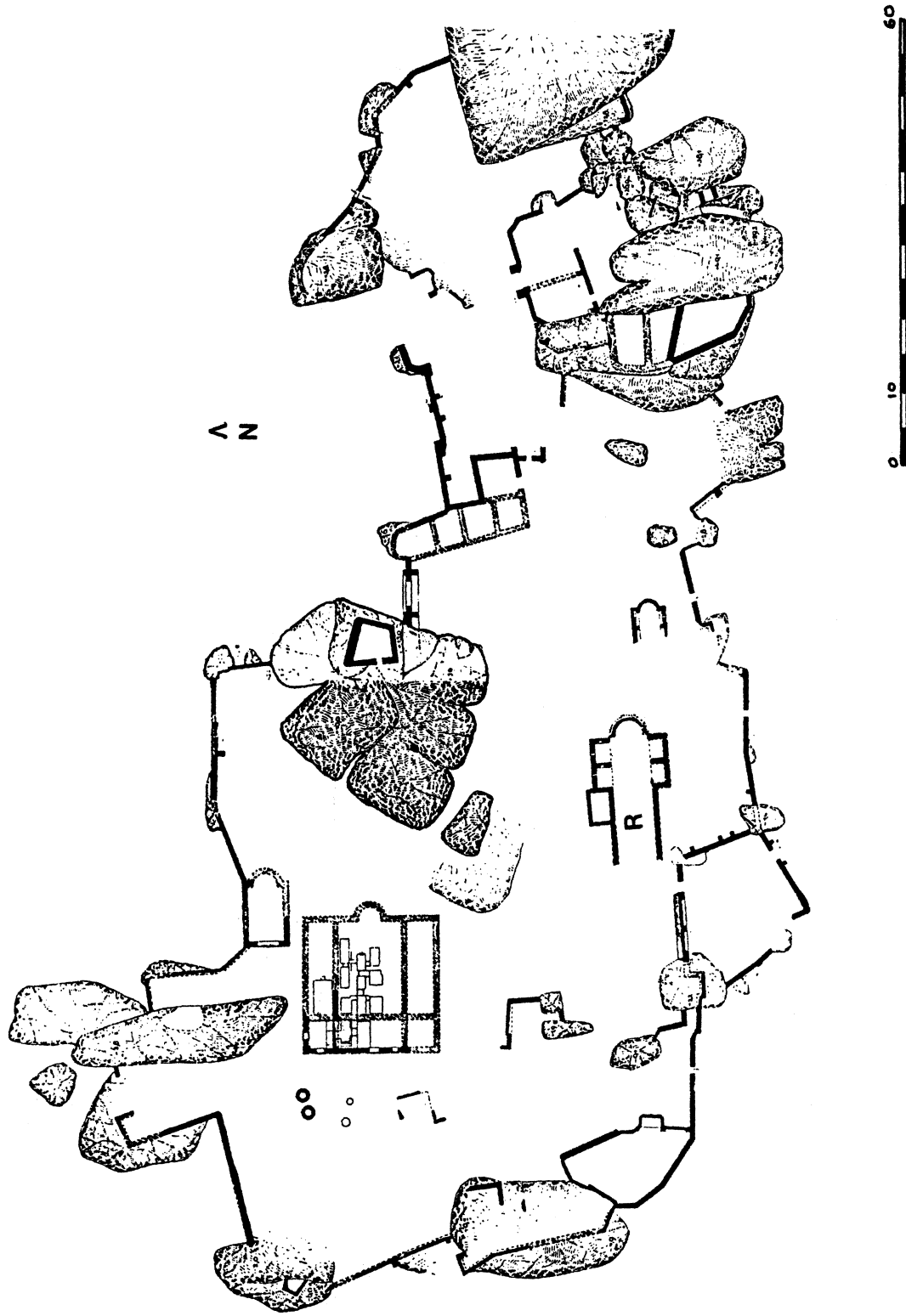
7 (a) Dar Qita monastery, plan (after Butler, *Early Churches in Syria*, fig. 48); (b) Qal'at et Touffah monastery, plan (after Peña, Castellana, and Fernández, *Les cénobites syriens*, fig. 35A); (c) Tell Bi'a monastery, sketch plan of the refectory (after Weiss, "Archaeology in Syria," fig. 26)



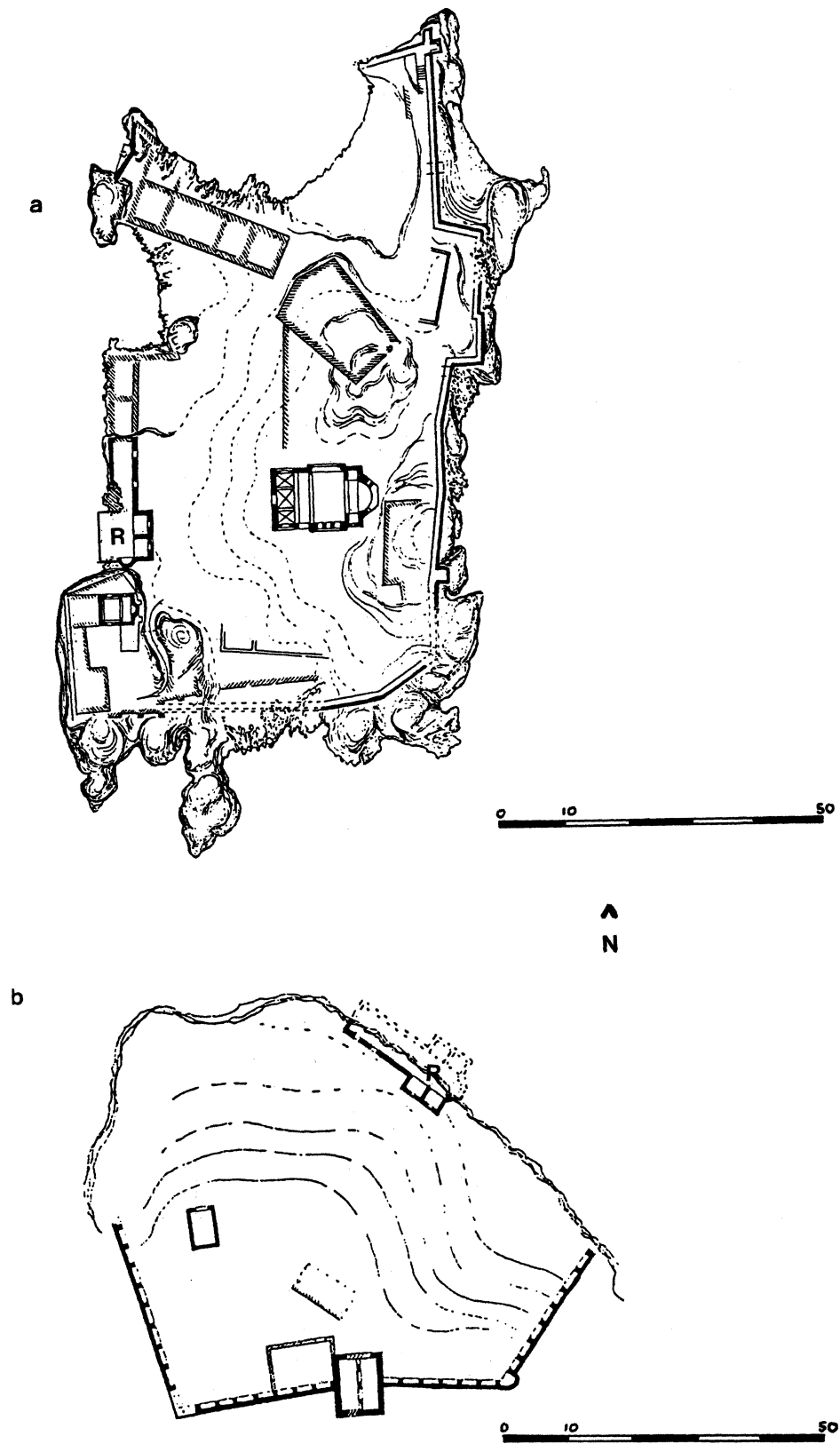
8 (a) Bin Bir Kilisse monastery (nos. 32, 39, and 43), plan; (b) Bin Bir Kilisse monastery (no. 44), plan (after Ramsay and Bell, *The Thousand and One Churches*, figs. 164, 181)



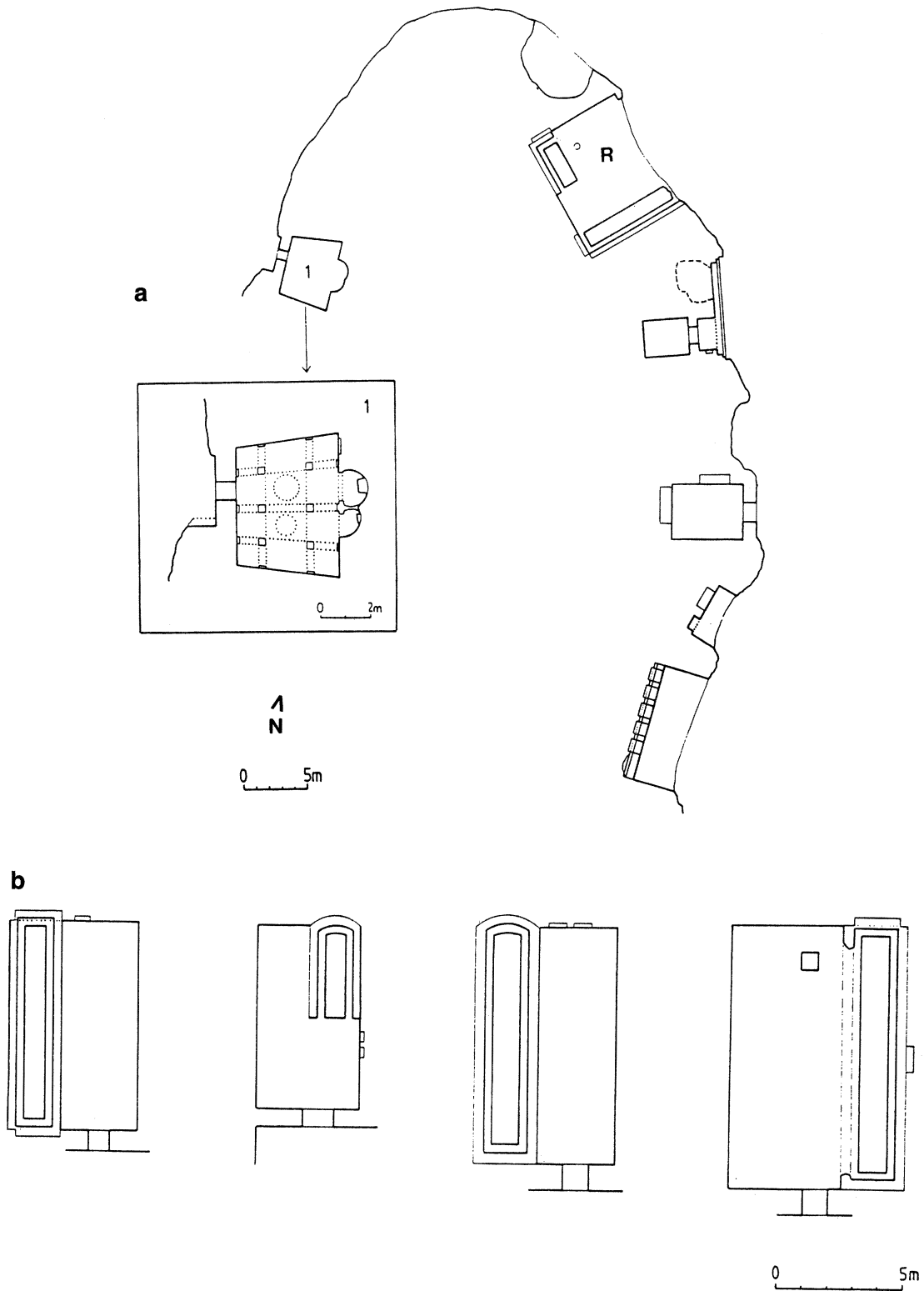
9 Latros, Kellibaron complex (after Wiegand, *Der Latmos*, fig. after p. 24)



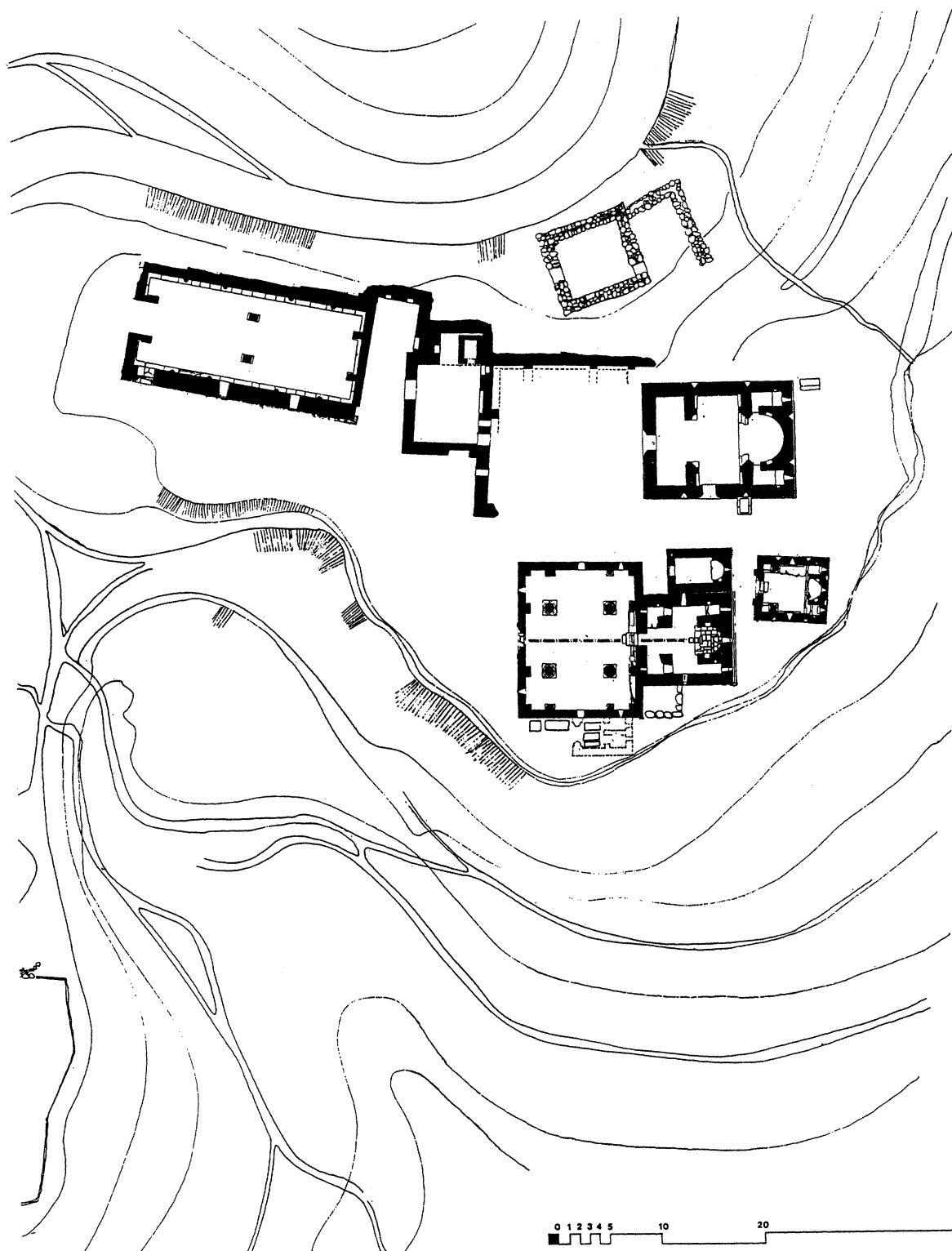
10 Latros, Stylos complex (after Wiegand, *Der Latmos*, fig. after p. 60)



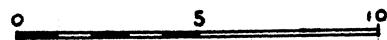
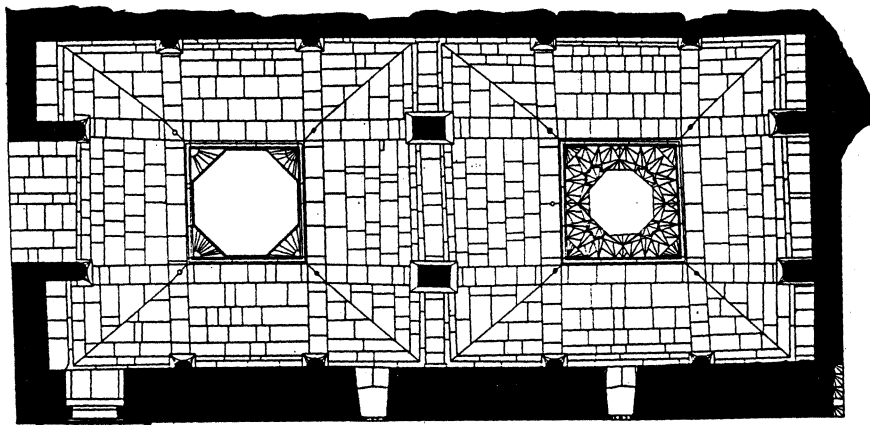
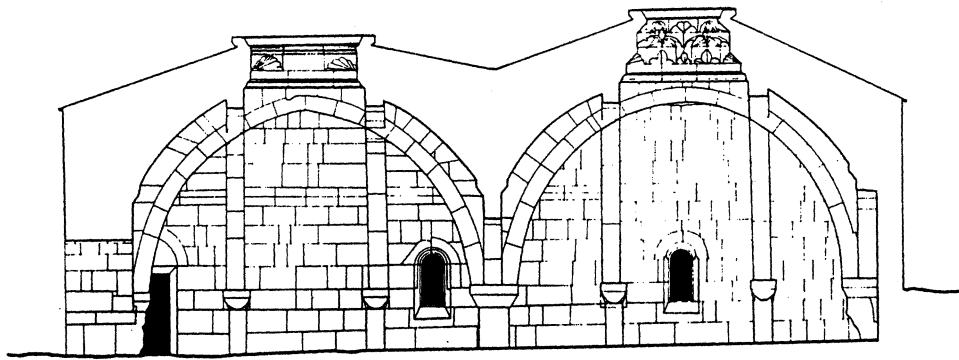
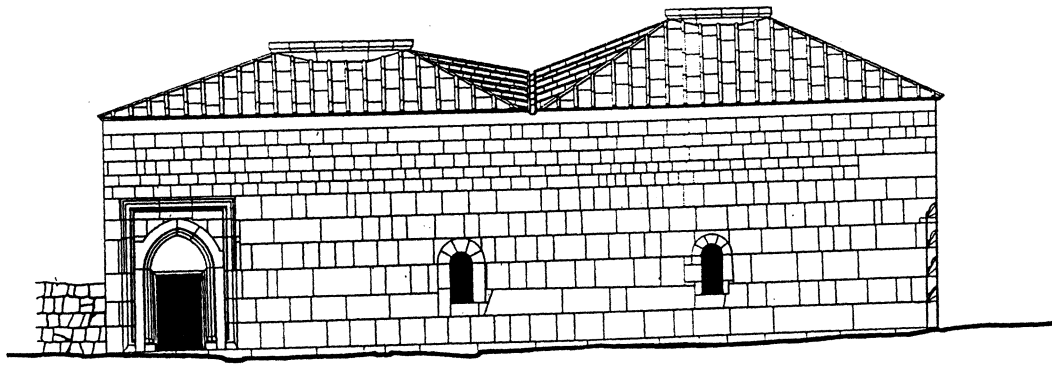
11 Latros: (a) monastery on the island of Herakleia; (b) monastery on the site of Mersinet (after Wiegand, *Der Latmos*, figs. 19, 72)



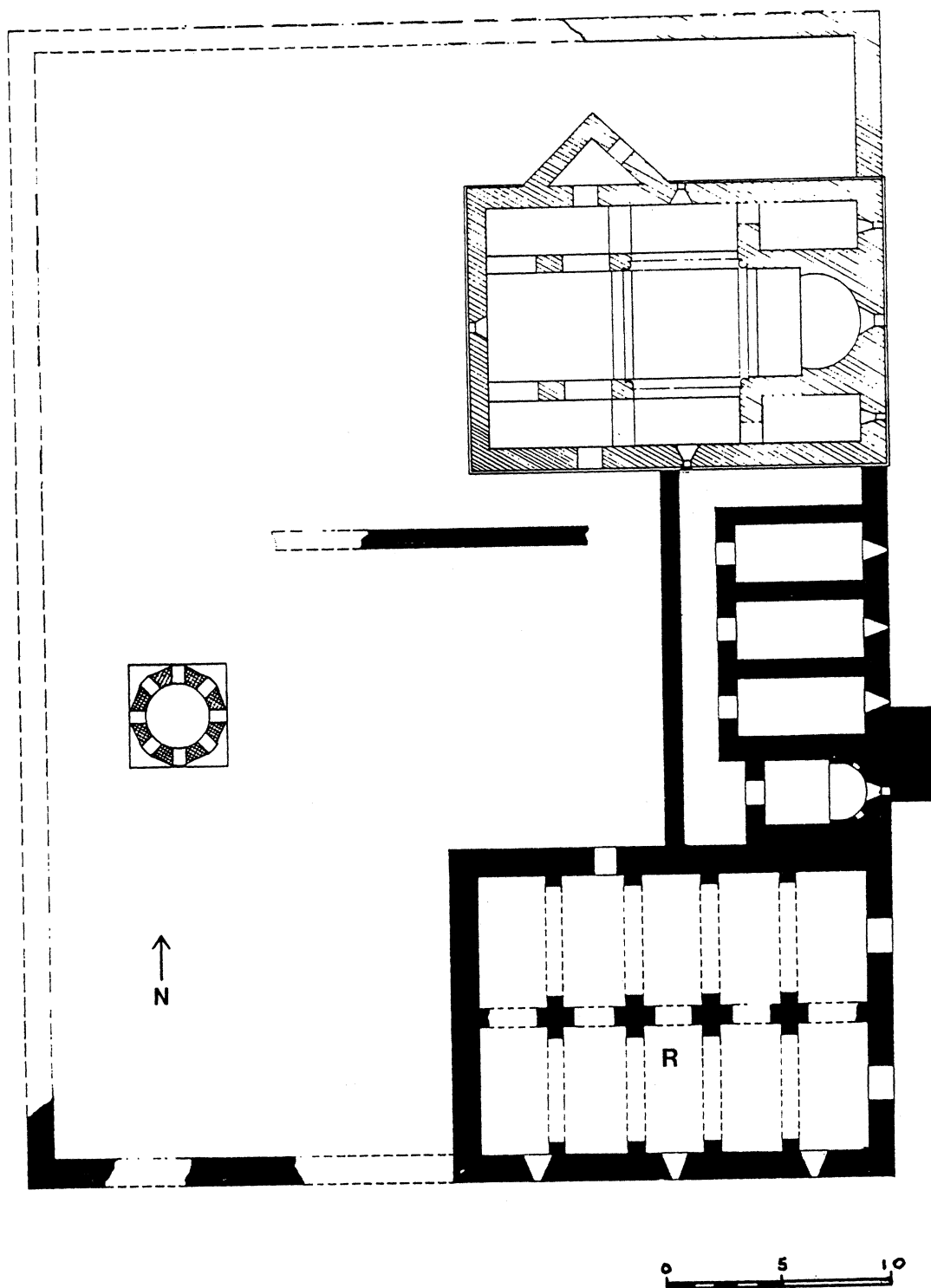
12 (a) Yusuf Koç Kilisesi monastery, plan; (b) Göreme valley, four rock-cut refectories, plans (after Rodley, *Cave Monasteries*, figs. 28, 32)



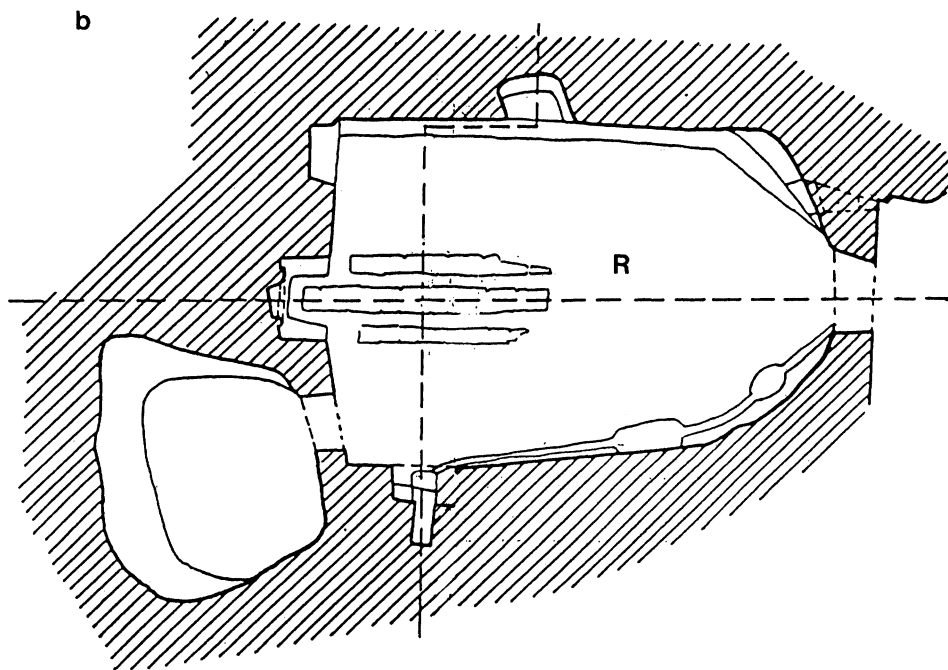
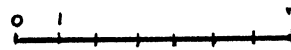
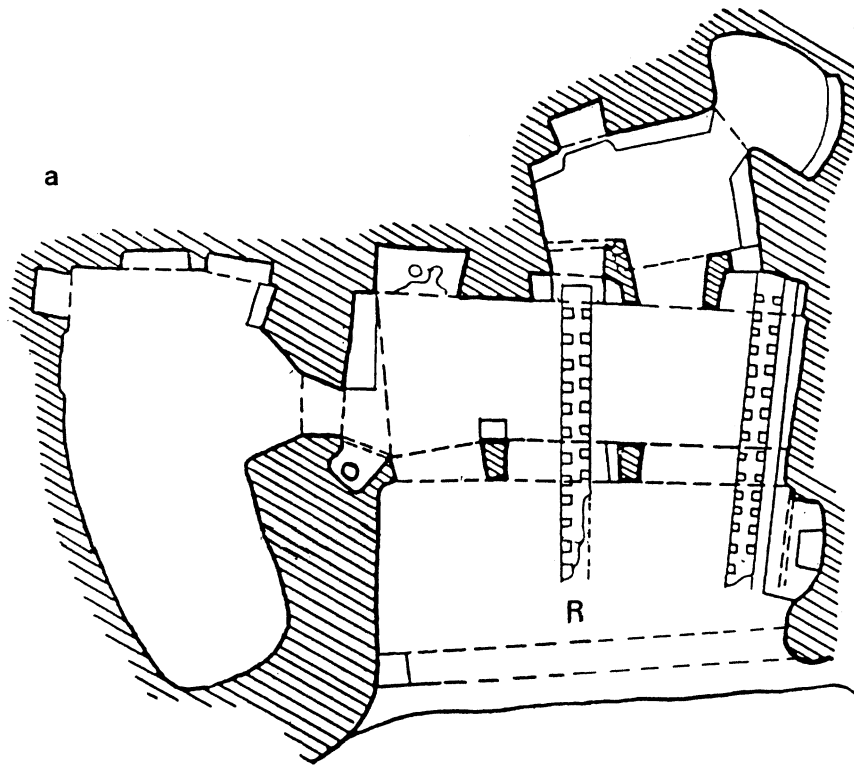
13 Haghartzin monastery, plan (after *Haghartzin*, fig. at p. 40)



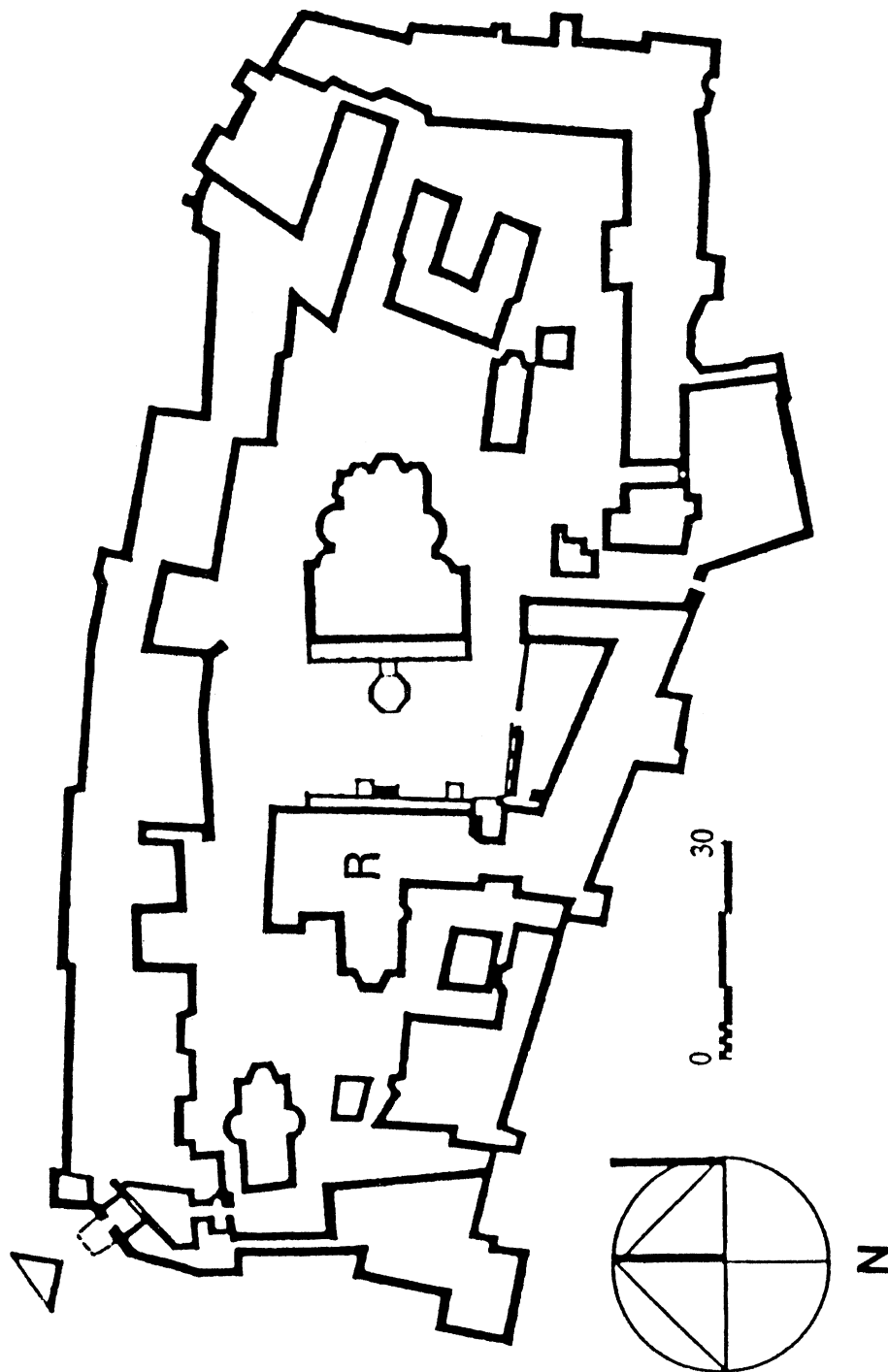
14 Haghartzin monastery, refectory elevation (*top*), cross-section (*middle*), and plan (*bottom*)
(after *Haghartzin*, fig. 19)



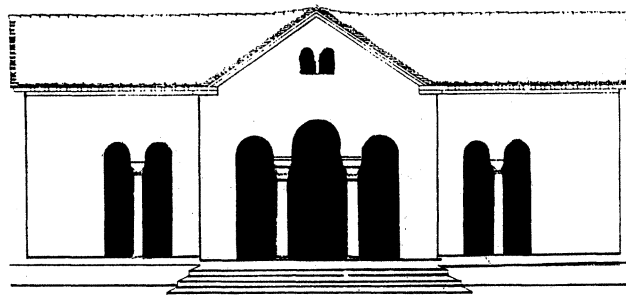
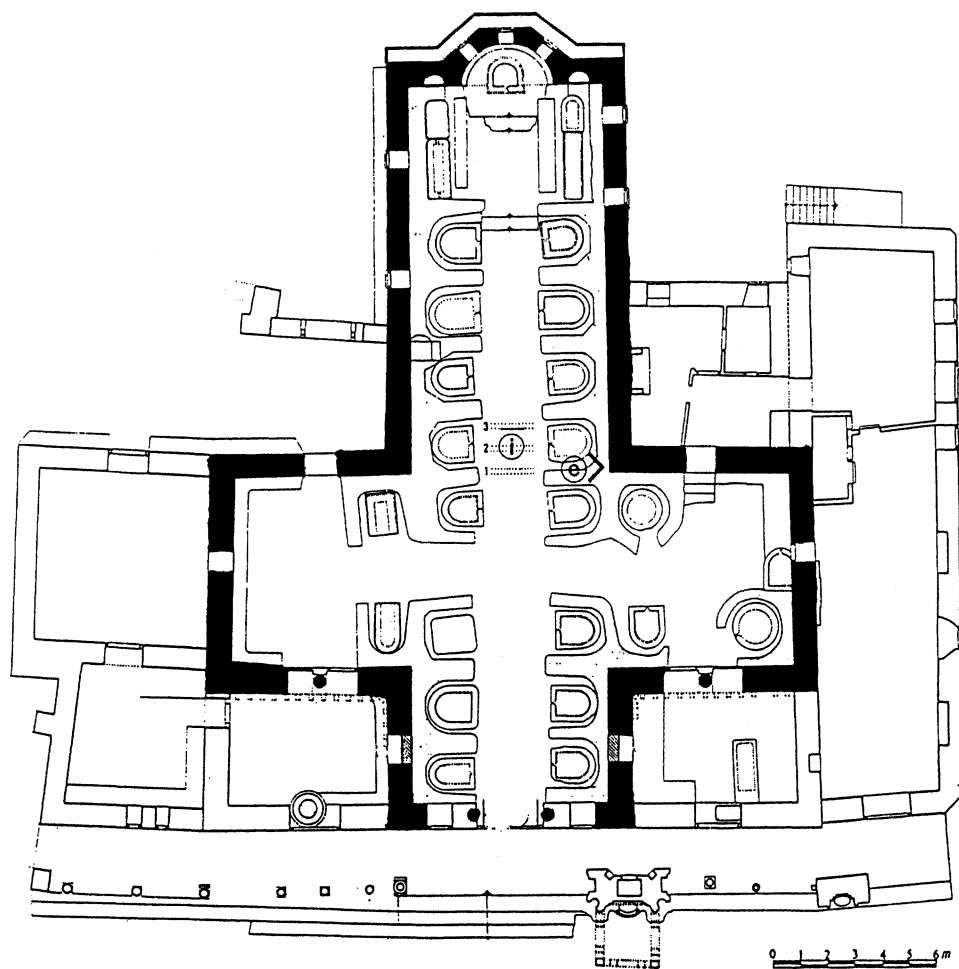
15 Hant'a monastery, plan (after Djobadze, *Early Medieval Georgian Monasteries*, fig. B at p. 28)



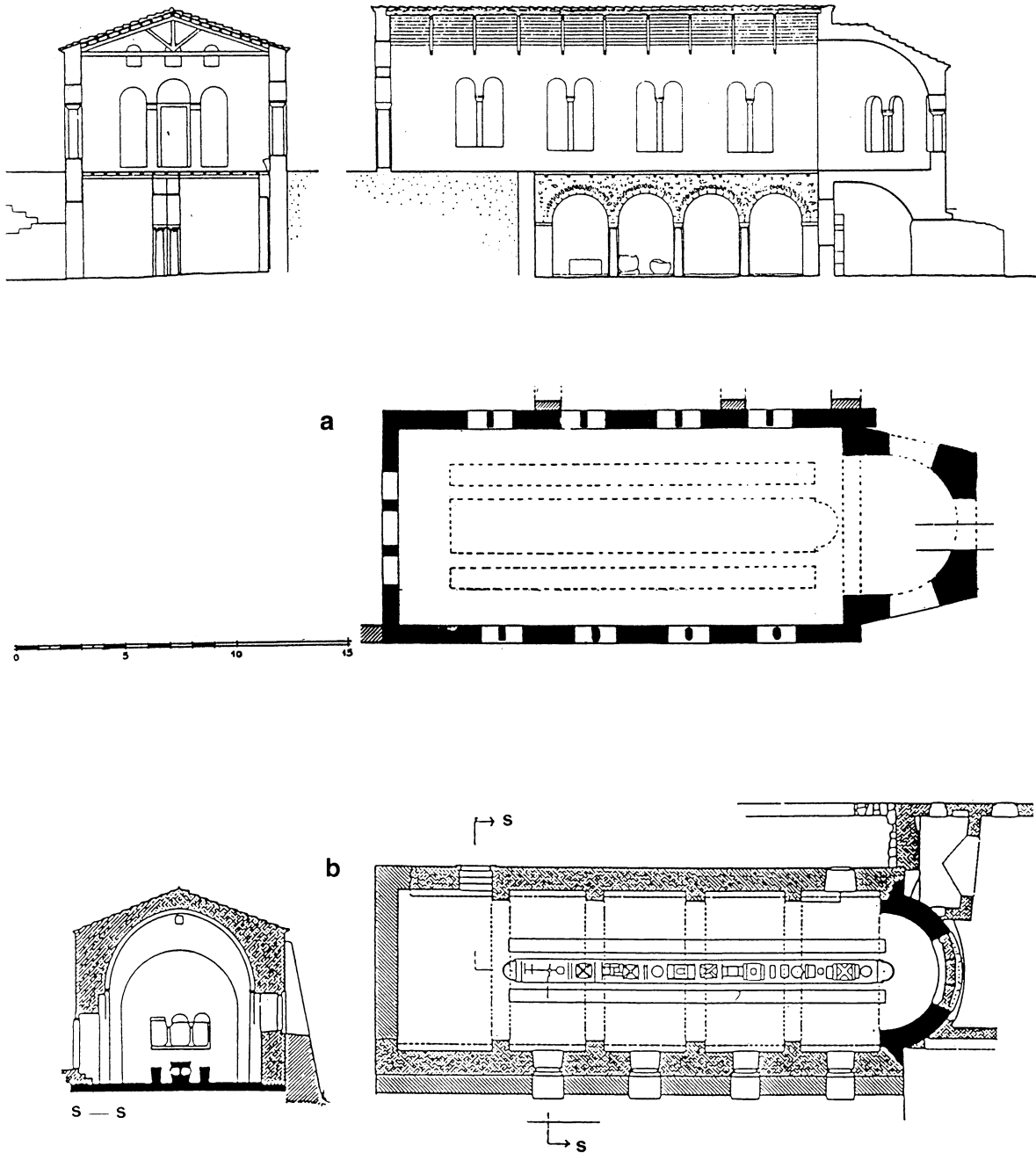
16 (a) Monastery of Udabno, refectory plan; (b) monastery of Bertubani, refectory plan
(after Vol'skaja, *Rospisi srednevekovykh trapeznykh Gruzii*, figs. 7, 29)



17 Mount Athos, Great Lavra monastery, plan (drawing by P. M. Mylonas)

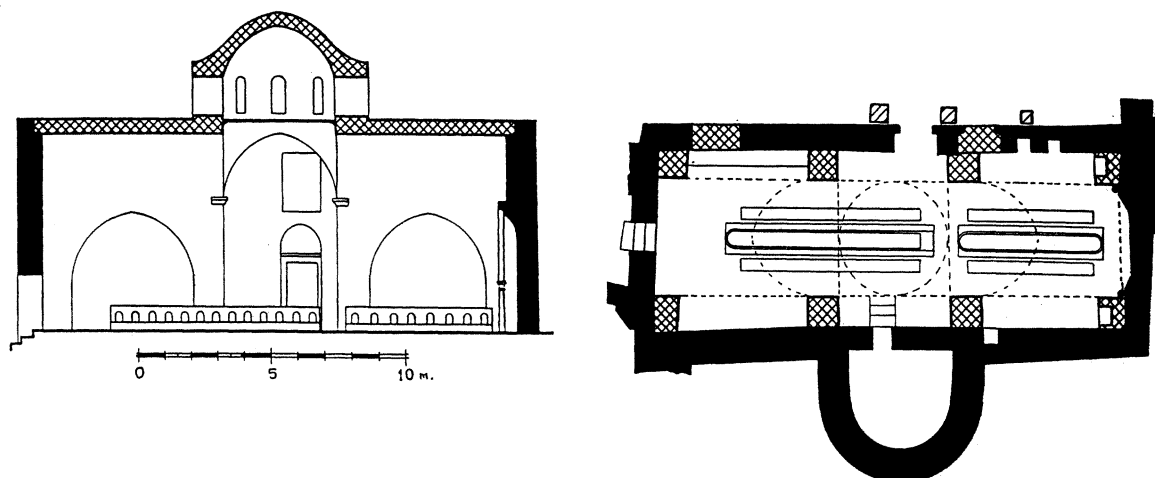


18 Mount Athos, Great Lavra monastery, refectory plan (*top*) and east elevation (*bottom*) (reconstruction after Mylonas, "La trapéza," figs. 4, 9)

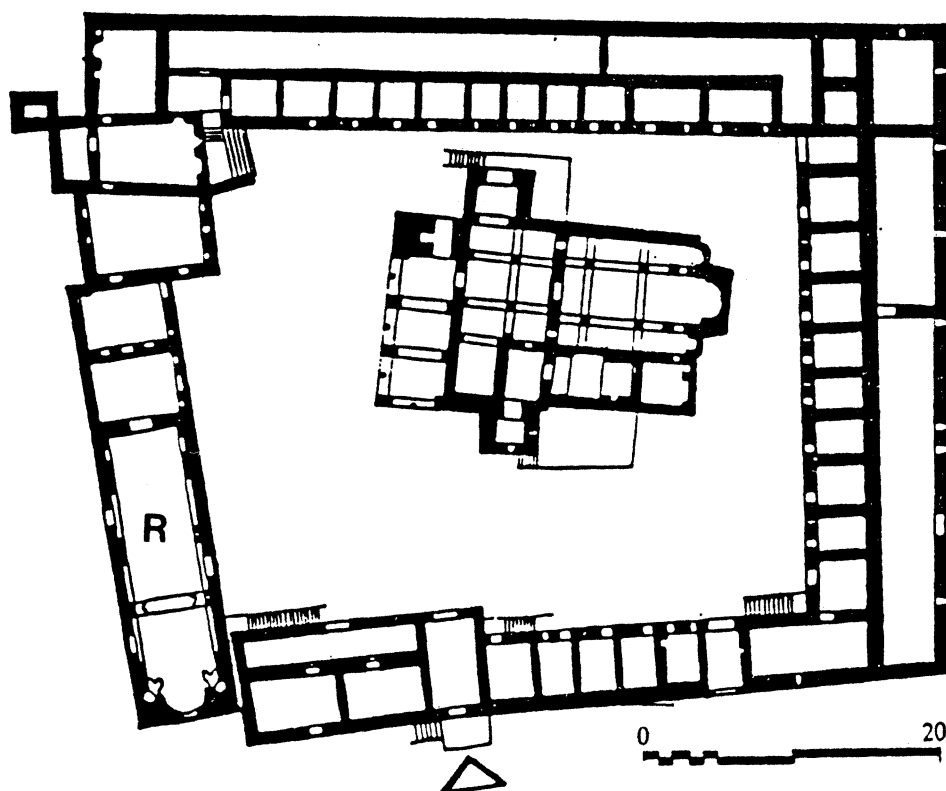


19 (a) Hosios Loukas monastery, refectory cross-sections (*top*) and plan (*bottom*) (after Stikas, *To oikodomikon chronikon*, fig. 103); (b) Chios, monastery of Nea Moni, refectory cross-section (*left*) and plan (*right*) (after Bouras, *Nea Moni on Chios*, fig. 151)

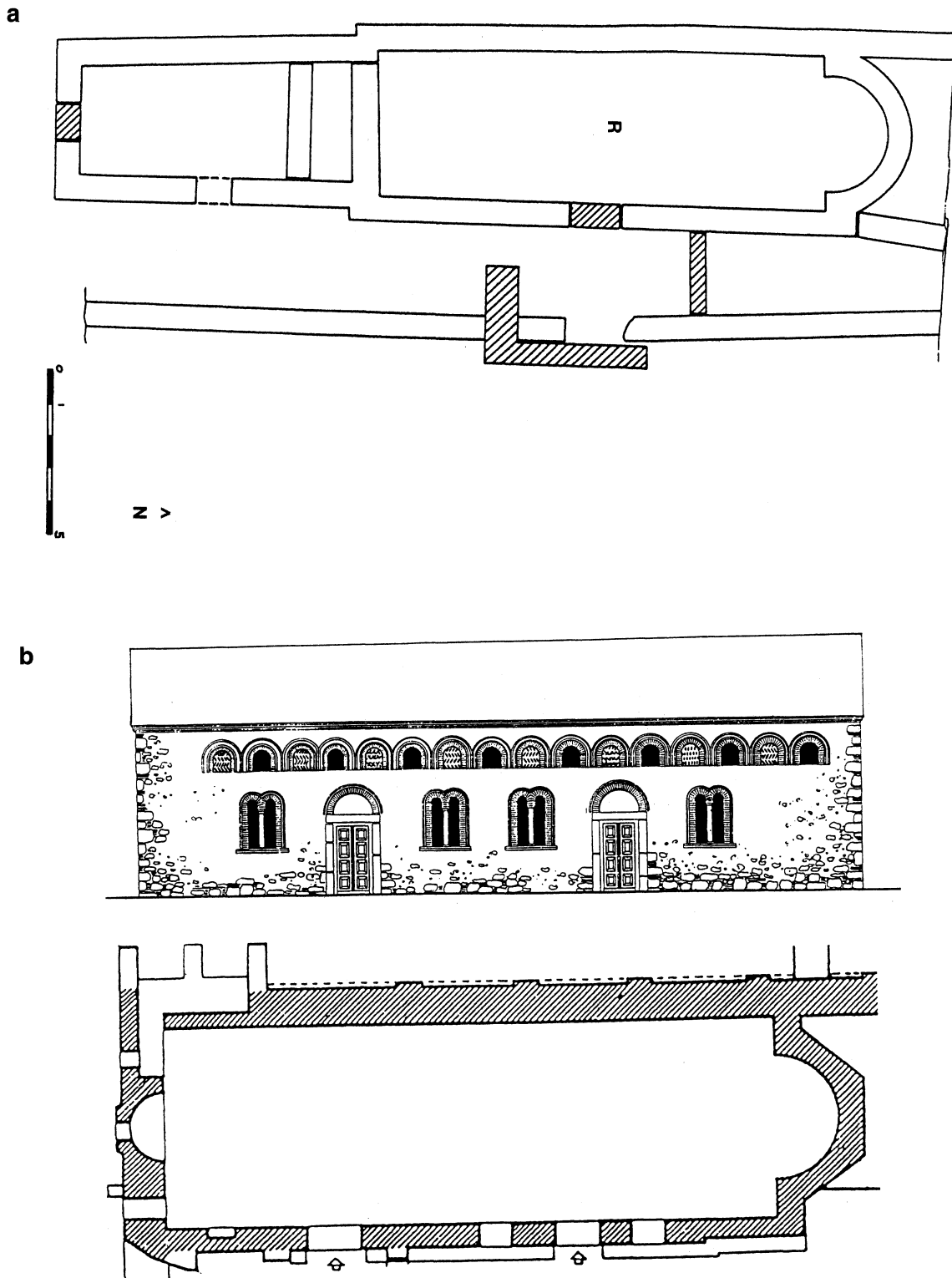
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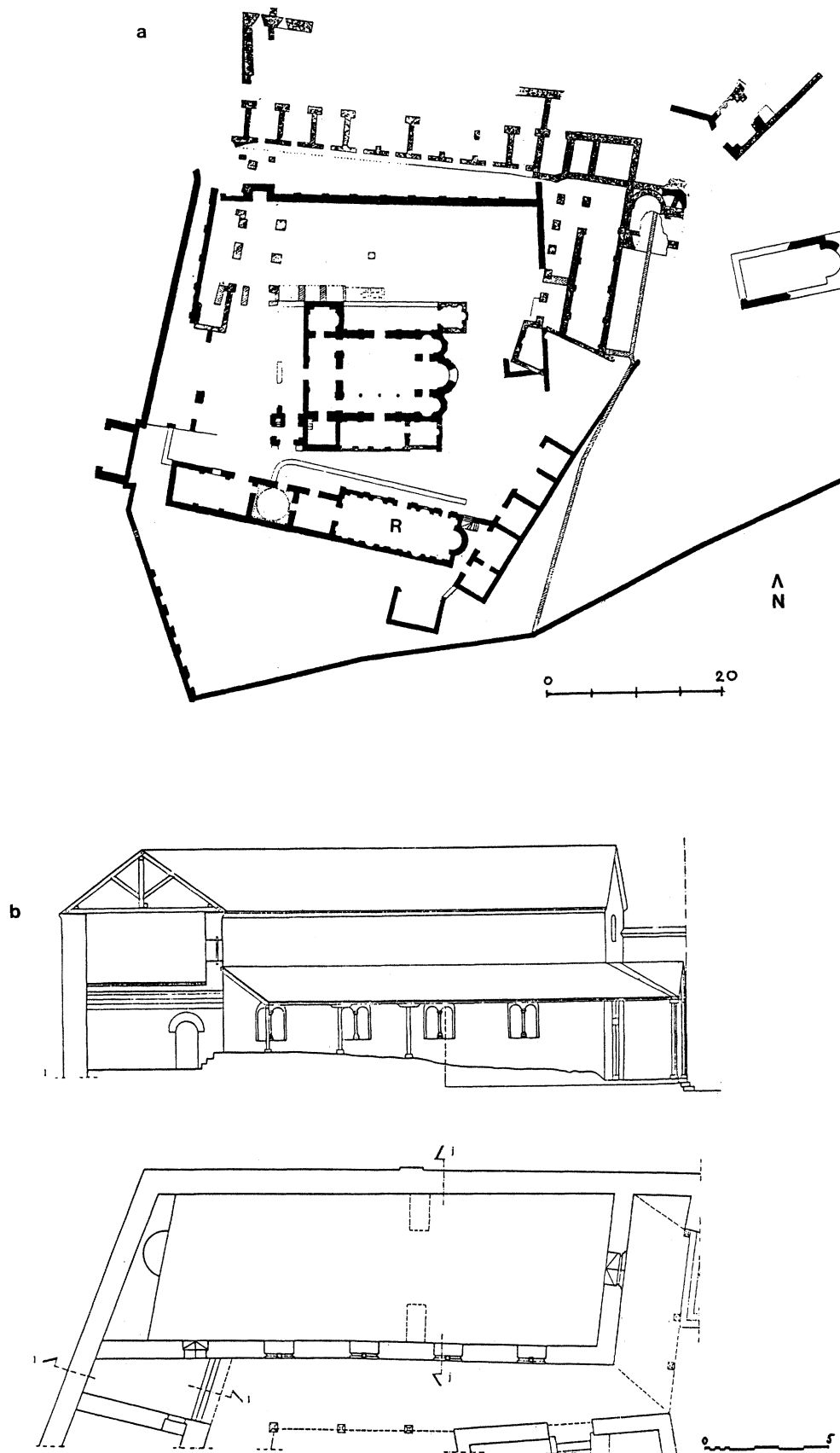
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20 (a) Patmos, monastery of St. John the Theologian, refectory cross-section (*left*) and plan (*right*) (after Orlandos, *Monasteriake*, fig. 58); (b) Hosios Meletios monastery, plan (after Orlandos, *Monasteriake*, fig. 8)

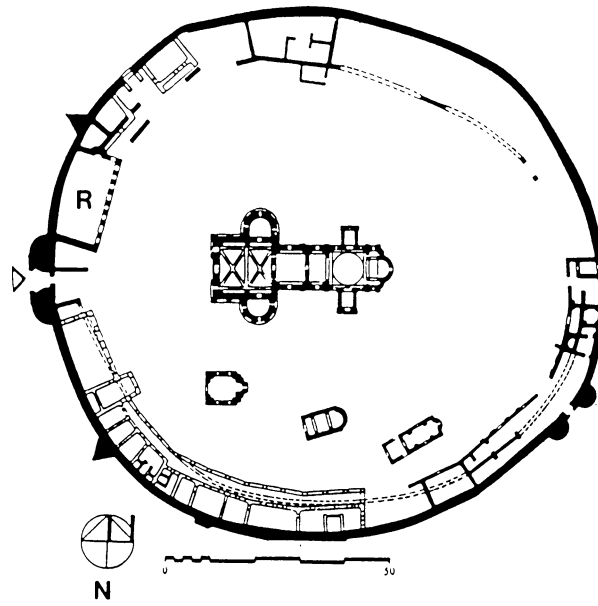


21 (a) Mount Papikion, Sostis complex, plan of the monastic refectory (after Zikos, "Papikion oros," pl. CCLXVII); (b) Mount Athos, Chilandar monastery, refectory elevation (*top*) and plan (*bottom*) (after Nenadović, "Jedna hipoteza," figs. 4, 9)

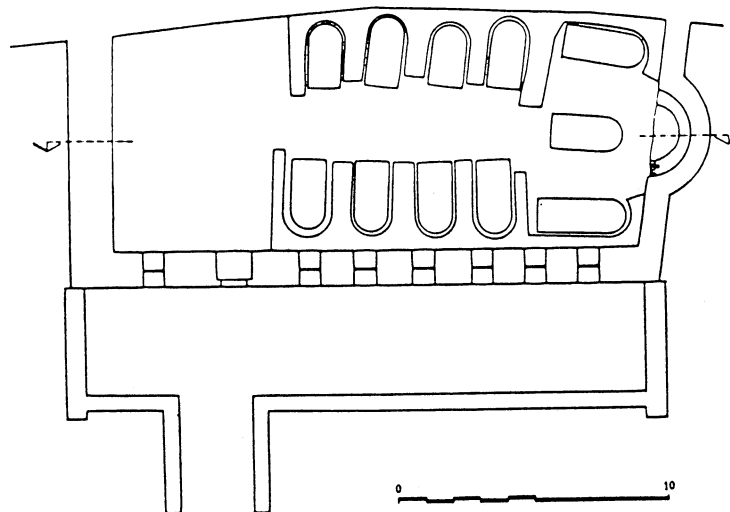
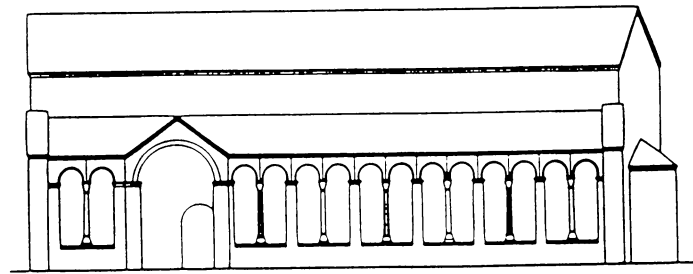


22 (a) Mistra, monastery of Brontochion, plan (after Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra*, pl. 16.2); (b) monastery of Djurdjevi Stupovi, refectory elevation (*top*) and plan (*bottom*) (after Popović, *Krst*, fig. 85)

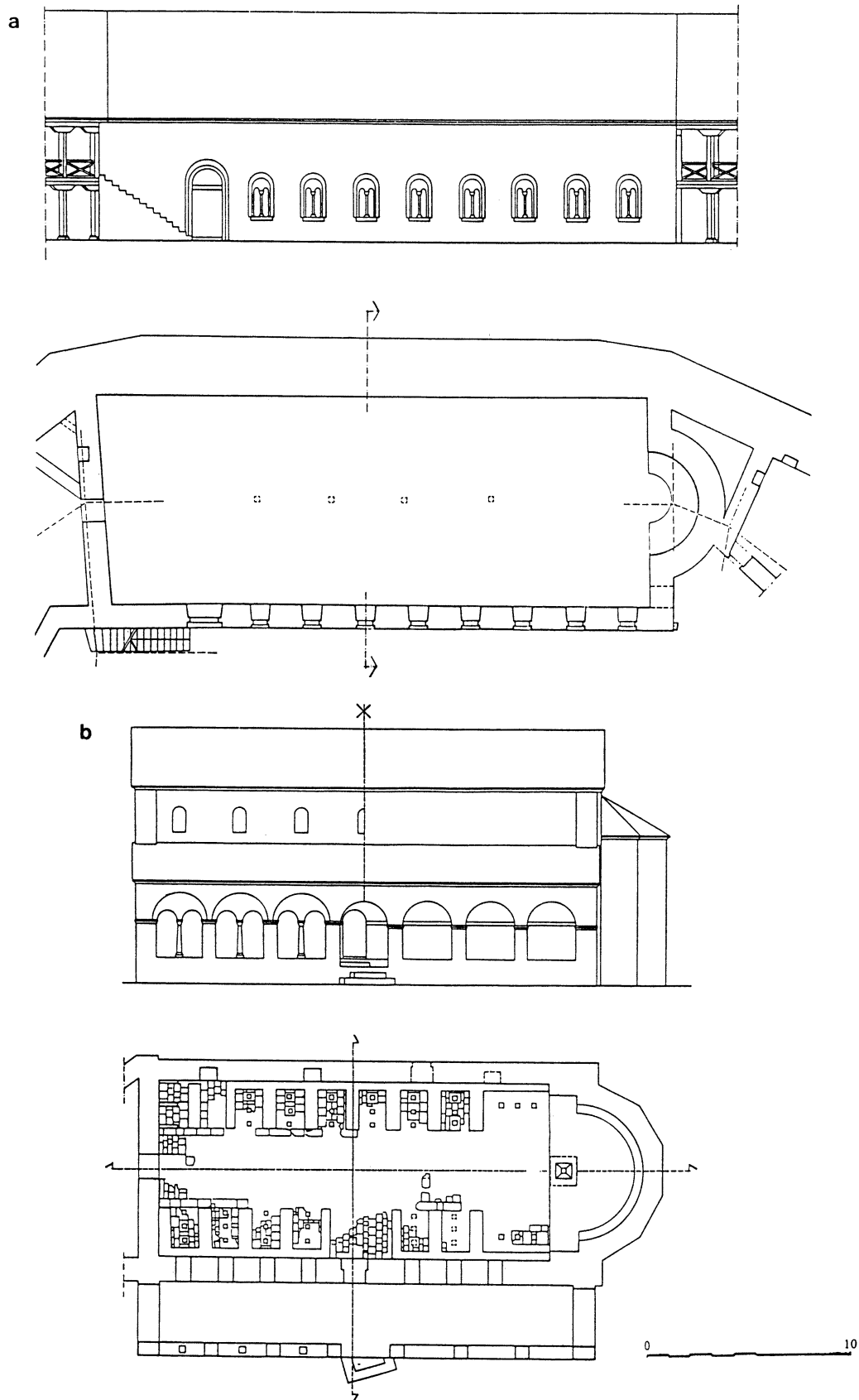
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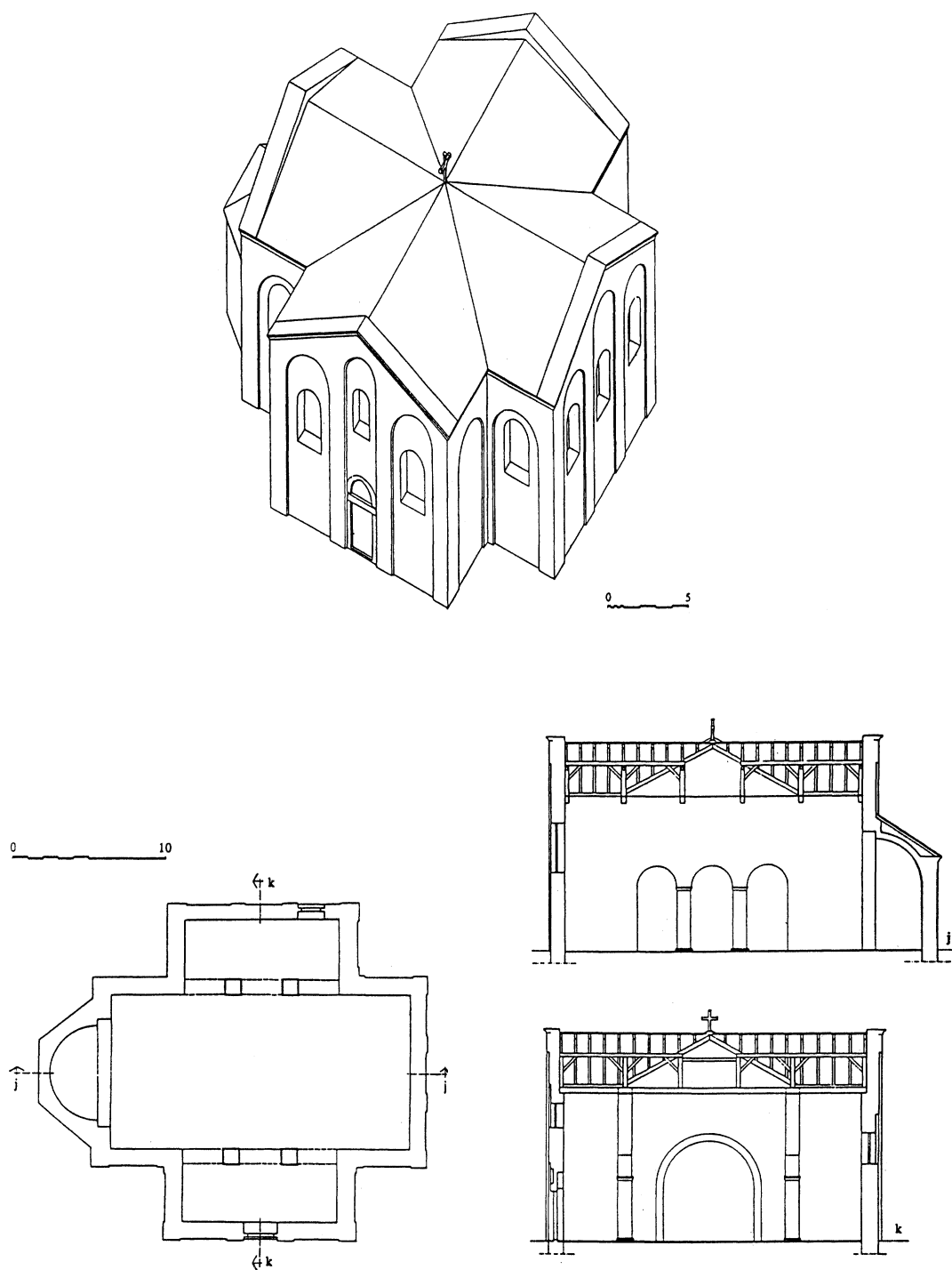
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23 Monastery of Studenica: (a) plan; (b) refectory elevation (*top*) and plan (*bottom*)
(after Popović, *Krst*, figs. 19, 86)

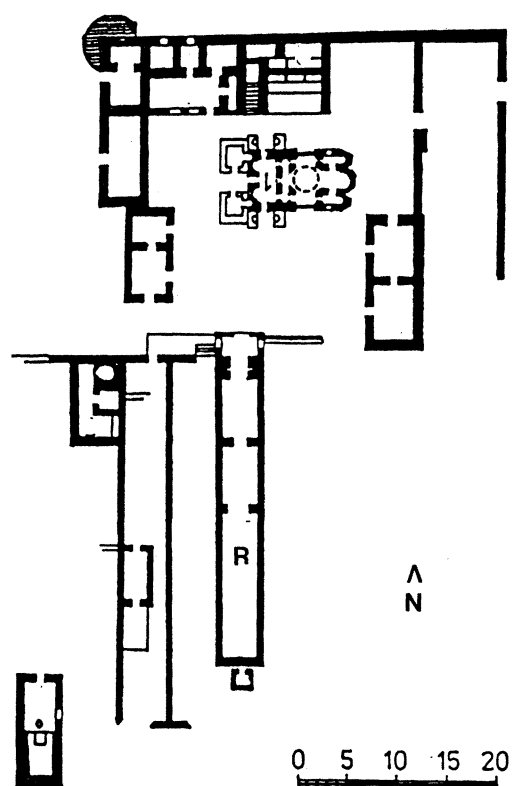


24 (a) Monastery of Sopoćani, refectory elevation (*top*) and plan (*bottom*) (after Popović, *Krst*, fig. 89);
 (b) monastery of St. Stephen in Banjska, refectory elevation (*top*) and plan (*bottom*) (after Popović, *Krst*, fig. 90)

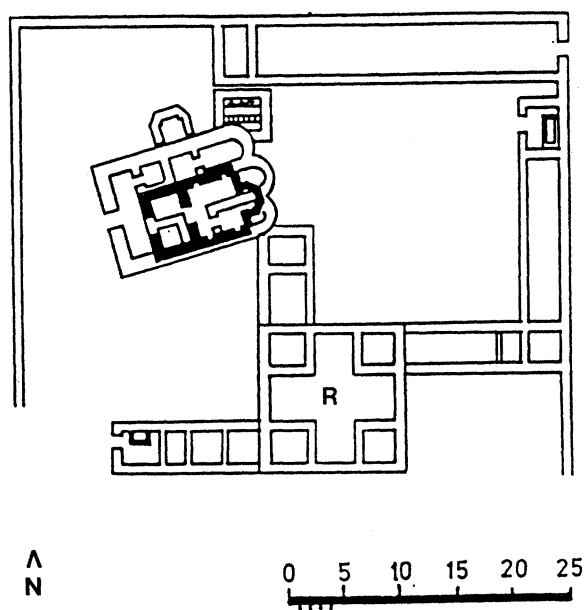


25 Holy Archangels monastery near Prizren, refectory reconstruction (*top*), plan (*bottom left*), and cross-sections (*bottom right*) (after Popović, *Krst*, figs. 92, 93)

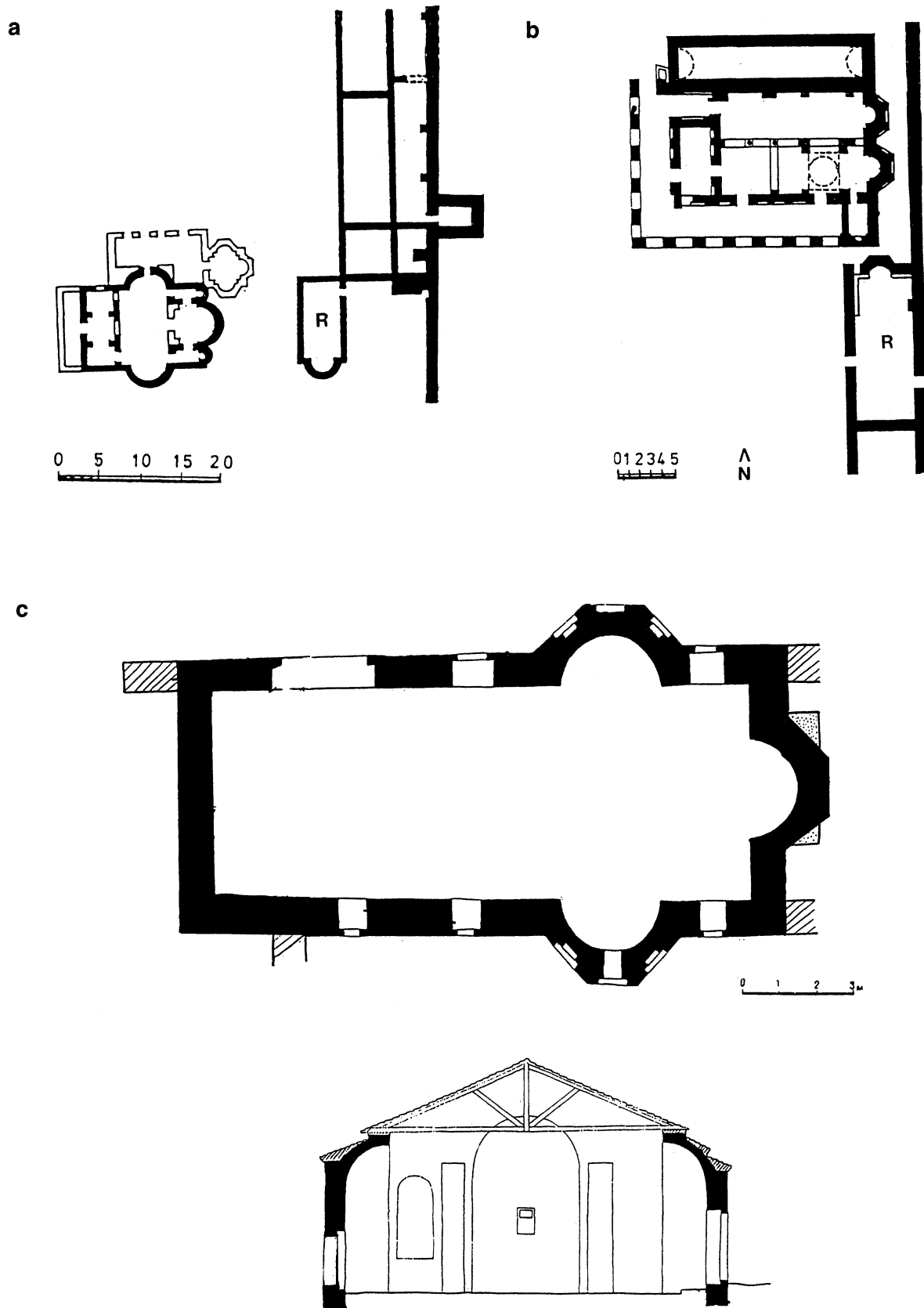
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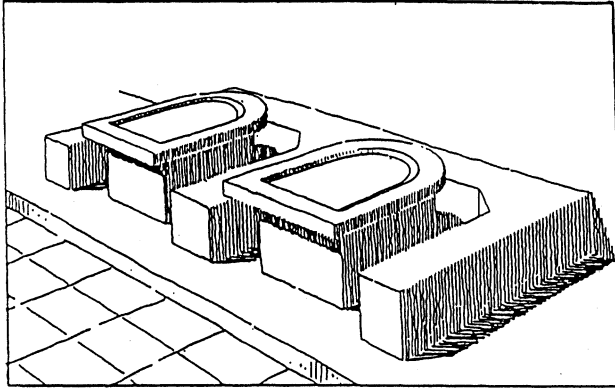


26 (a) Monastery of Patleina, plan (after Tuleškov, *Arhitektura*, fig. 216); (b) Tuzlalaka monastery, plan (after Tuleškov, *Arhitektura*, fig. 214)

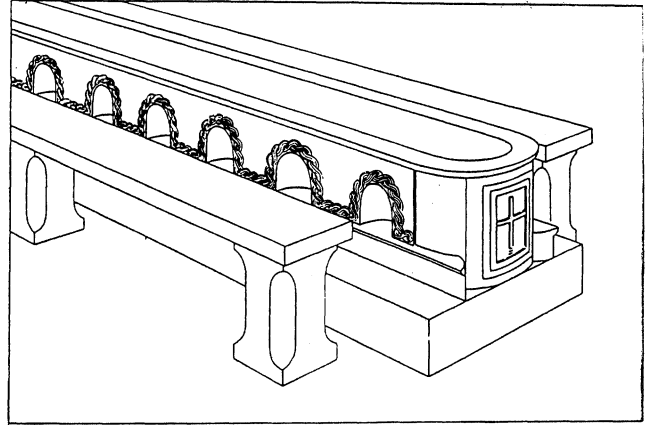


27 (a) Monastery of Kurdžali, plan (after Tuleškov, *Arhitektura*, fig. 218); (b) Turnovo, monastery of St. John of Rila, plan (after Tuleškov, *Arhitektura*, fig. 151); (c) Apollonia (Albania), monastery of the Dormition of the Theotokos, refectory plan (*top*) and cross-section (*bottom*) (after Meksi, "Deux constructions," fig. v)

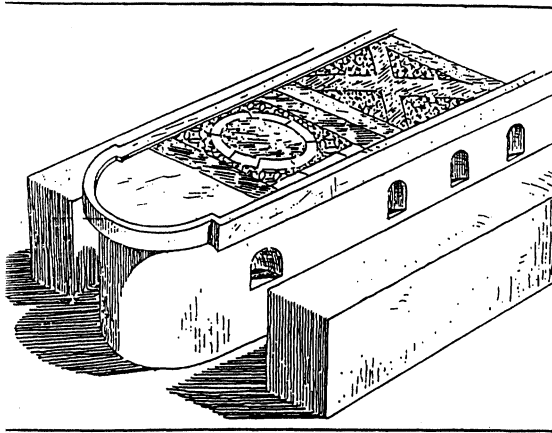
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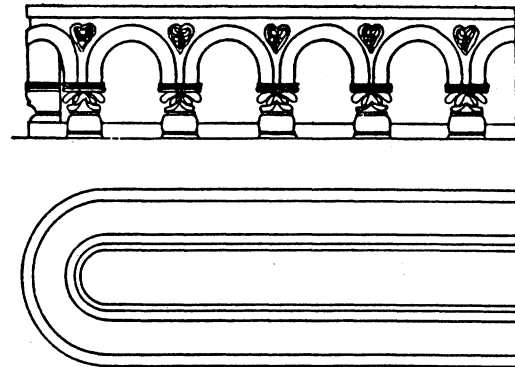
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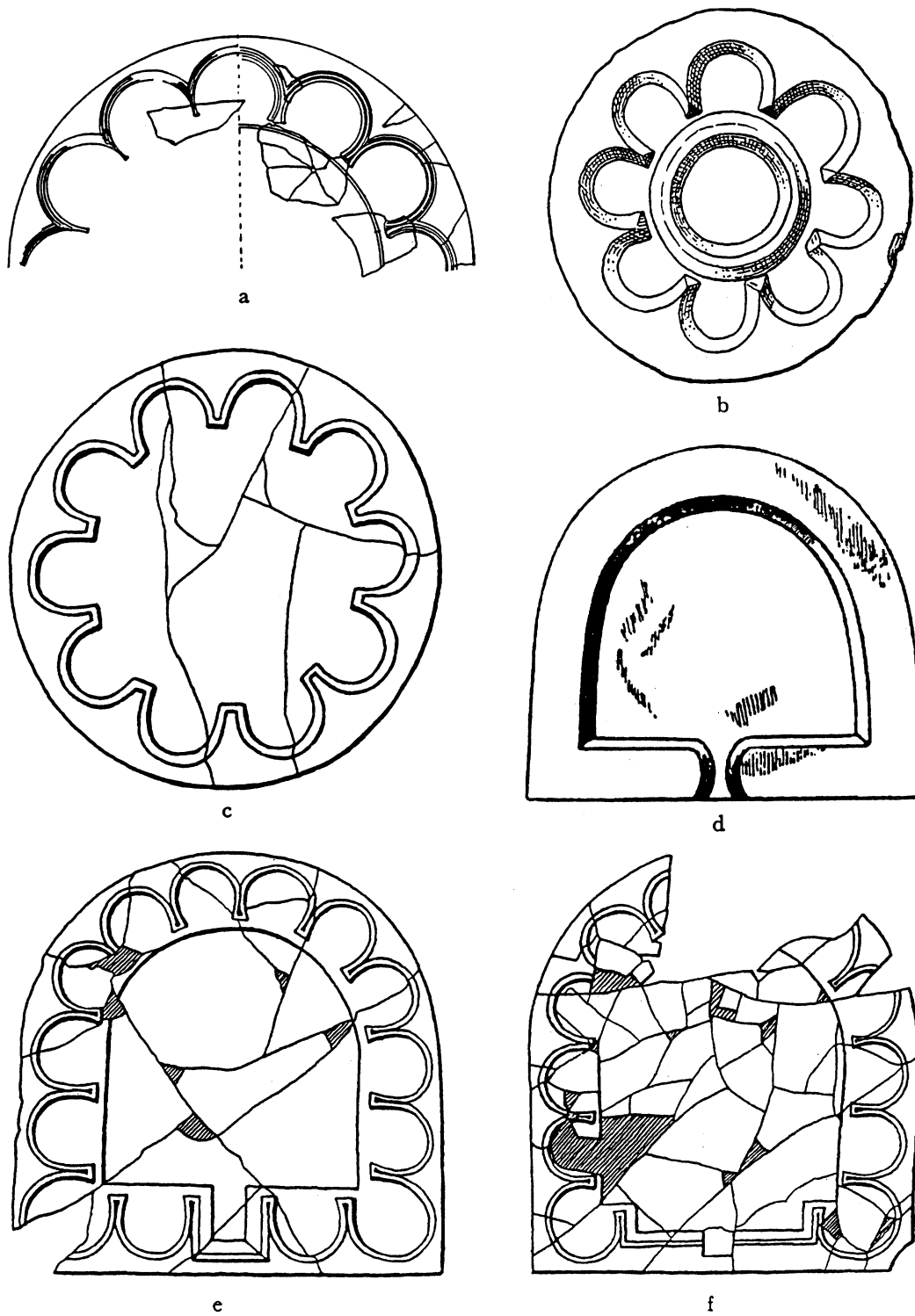
c



d



28 Refectory tables: (a) Great Lavra on Mount Athos; (b) St. John the Theologian on Patmos; (c) Nea Moni on Chios (after Orlandos, *Monasteriake*, figs. 65–67); (d) Treskavac near Prilep (after Popović, *Krst*, fig. 101c)



29 Altar tables (after Nussbaum, "Zum Problem der runden und sigmaförmigen Altarplatten," fig. 2)

facing each other. From the structural point of view, the dining hall was an elongated rectangular hall divided into bays, either vaulted or domed. The most important feature of its interior was a single long masonry table, or several rows of tables, sometimes circular in shape, as in St. Symeon's community. A stone lectern was an obligatory piece of furniture within the refectory because it was of extraordinary importance for the performance of the refectory ritual. It was the place from which prayers were read during meals. The interior decoration of the walls unfortunately has not survived, but judging from the fresco remains of painted crosses on one of the surviving lecterns, as mentioned above, the restricted painted decoration was part of the interior setting. All available data lead to the conclusion that the refectory was an extremely important building in the monastic complexes of Egypt. It was definitely a sacred and not a secular space.

In the monastic communities of Palestine, especially in the *koinobia* of the Judean desert, the location of the refectory was slightly different, but one of the basic planning objectives was to provide a convenient passage from the church to the refectory.²⁵ In one of the earliest monasteries, founded by Martyrius in the fifth century, the refectory was located northwest of the church, close to the burial cave, while in the complex at Khirbet ed Deir it was placed near a group of sacred buildings. It is important to remember that two types of monastic community, *lavra* and *koinobion*, were characteristic of the Palestinian monastic world of the fourth to sixth centuries. In a way, the *lavra* type was similar to the *skete* organization of Egypt, in which the anchorites lived in secluded cells and gathered only once a week for communal prayer and the communal meal. *Koinobia* in Palestine, as elsewhere in the Christian world, were enclosed, compact monastic settlements in which the monks lived according to prescribed rules. In both types of monastery the refectory, or gathering place for the communal meal, was in close proximity to the church building. Recent archaeological excavation in different *lavrai* has not uncovered any examples of a refectory building,²⁶ but written sources mention a common meal after the Sunday liturgy.²⁷ In the Life of St. Euthymius it is said that Euthymius together with Theoctistus founded the community in the cave. He prohibited conversation in the church as well as in the refectory.²⁸ From the same *vita* we learn that Euthymius' successor Fidus built a *koinobion* surrounded with walls, "and the old church he made into a refectory, and built the new church above it."²⁹

In the fourth century on Sinai, there were holy men living in their cells around the site of the Burning Bush. They were the predecessors of the cenobitic community of the St. Catherine monastery established in the sixth century. The holy men sometimes gathered in the garden near the Burning Bush for a meal.³⁰ From the relevant data, it seems evident that in the Holy Land, as in Egypt, in the early days of monasticism a communal meal, whether held in *lavrai* or in *koinobia*, was part of the monastic routine. The reason for the absence of material remains of *lavra* refectories could be that communal meals in

²⁵ Cf. Y. Hirschfeld, *The Judean Desert Monasteries in The Byzantine Period* (New Haven, Conn.-London, 1992), esp. 190–96; J. Patrich, *Sabas, Leader of Palestinian Monasticism* (Washington, D.C., 1995), 142, 193.

²⁶ Cf. Hirschfeld, *Desert Monasteries*, 190.

²⁷ *Vita sancti Gerasimi anonyma*, ed. K. M. Koikylides (Jerusalem, 1902), 2, 3.

²⁸ *Cyril of Scythopolis: The Lives of the Monks of Palestine*, trans. R. M. Price, notes by J. Binns (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1991), 13, col. 18.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 61.

³⁰ Cf. J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land* (Jerusalem-Warminster, 1981), 96.4.8.

lavrai were served in the courtyard in front of the church, in an open space, or under some light shelter. If the building was especially constructed of wood for that purpose, it would not have left any material traces. A parallel can be found in the assembly of the holy men near the Burning Bush for communal meals.

One of the best preserved sixth-century monastic refectories in the Judean desert was that in the monastery of Martyrius.³¹ The building was located in the western part of the monastery next to the burial cave and linked to the main church by a corridor. The architectural plan of the refectory was of a basilical type: a vast rectangular hall with two rows of stone columns supporting the upper gallery and timber roof construction (Fig. 4). The dining room had a mosaic floor and plastered walls decorated with Greek inscriptions painted in red.³² A dedicatory inscription in Greek was placed on the floor at the main entrance to the building. Of the refectory furniture only stone benches coated with reddish plaster have been preserved. The arrangement of tables and the position of the lectern remain unknown.

Another monastic refectory of a different architectural plan is found in the complex at Khirbet ed Deir (Fig. 5a).³³ The dining hall was situated west of the cave church, close to the cave containing the founder's tomb, recalling the position of the refectory at the monastery of Martyrius. The refectory was a two-story building with an elongated, narrow rectangular plan. The kitchen was located on the first floor, while the dining room for the community was on the second. Structurally it was a stone building with rows of pilasters along its longitudinal walls dividing the space into eight bays, probably with a series of transverse stone arches. Only scattered remains of the original mosaic floor have been retrieved in the debris on the ground-floor level.³⁴

In the monastery of Castellion in the Judean desert,³⁵ the refectory was located west of the church (Fig. 5b); it was a large hall attached directly to the west wall of the church. In another sixth-century monastic complex at Beit She'an, the refectory was located near the main church, directly opposite the church building.³⁶

In the Holy Land, as in Egypt, the monastic refectory and the communal meal had close links with the church and the liturgy performed there, or with the burial chapel that served as another important sacred space within the monastery. All of the mentioned examples stress the functional links between the church and the dining hall. In a classification of special areas within the monastic enclosure reserved for buildings with different functions, the church and the refectory always represented the sacred zone of the complex.

In Syria, monasticism in both its anchoritic and cenobitic forms was highly developed as early as the beginning of the fourth century.³⁷ One of the earliest *koinobia* in the region of Antioch was founded in the district around Gindarus around the year 330.³⁸ Like a typical cenobitic Syrian monastery, it included a tower for the seclusion of the

³¹ Cf. Hirschfeld, *Desert Monasteries*, 91ff.

³² Ibid., 192.

³³ Ibid., 194–95.

³⁴ Ibid., 41.

³⁵ Ibid., 52.

³⁶ G. M. Fitzgerald, *A Sixth-Century Monastery at Beth Shan (Scythopolis)*, IV (Philadelphia, 1939), 1–2.

³⁷ *Theodoret of Cyrrhus: A History of the Monks of Syria*, trans. R. M. Price (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1985).

³⁸ Ibid., II.9 and p. 35, n. 8.

monk-founder, or father superior, alongside the church or an oratory, a communal burial place, dwellings for the monks, and a hostel, which was sometimes added to the complex. An indispensable part of the monastery was a multipurpose communal building that served as a place for the monks' daily manual work and as a refectory.³⁹ This building was also used as an assembly hall for the brethren whom the father superior brought together weekly for spiritual training. This weekly gathering, according to the Rules of Rabbula,⁴⁰ also included a communal meal. In Syria there were two types of communal monastic building: vast rectangular stone buildings without any open annexes, and rectangular halls with a porch, at times surrounded by porches on all sides.⁴¹ The building could have one or two stories. Porches were formed of rows of rectangular piers without any decoration. Pillars were simple, without any bases or capitals. The exact use of these porticoes remains unknown.⁴² There has been some speculation about their function, mostly in connection with monastic pilgrimage sites, but recent archaeological work has not succeeded in determining their use.⁴³ The position of the monastic refectory, or monastic communal building, in relation to the main church or oratory varied considerably among Syrian *koinobia*. They could be located either north or west of the church. It is significant also that these buildings are often connected with the burial caves of the monasteries or even with burial chapels. In a monastery near the old city of Kefr Fenche, dating from the fifth and sixth centuries, the monastic hall was situated on the north side of the church. The stone building was rectangular in plan, had two stories, and was surrounded by porticoes (Fig. 6).⁴⁴ The most interesting part of the building was its east wing, where the funerary chapel was placed; the remains of one sarcophagus were found along with two additional tombs situated in the same room. The western part of the building contained a vast monastic hall. A similar relation between the multipurpose monastic hall (refectory) and burial place can be seen in the complex at Dar Qita, with its church dating from the beginning of the fifth century (Fig. 7a).⁴⁵ In the monastery at Qal'at et Touffah, the multipurpose monastic hall was situated next to the church building on its north side, forming a separate court divided by a wall from the rest of the monastery complex (Fig. 7b).⁴⁶

Although refectories in Syrian *koinobia* were part of larger multipurpose buildings, they were located in proximity to the church or to a burial site. This leads one to conclude that the monastic refectory in Syria, as in Egypt or Palestine, was positioned near and related to the sacred space of the monastic complex. Recent archaeological excavations in Tell Bi'a (Syria) have brought to light a sixth-century Byzantine monastic complex.⁴⁷ The rooms located north of the church included a refectory, a rectangular room paved with stone slabs and containing omega-shaped masonry benches (Fig. 7c). The shape of

³⁹Cf. I. Peña, P. Castellana, and R. Fernández, *Les cénobites syriens* (Milan, 1983), 30ff.

⁴⁰Cf. D. G. Turbessi, *Regole monastiche antiche* (Rome, 1978), 109 and, for the Rules of Rabbula, esp. 308–12.

⁴¹Peña, Castellana, and Fernández, *Les cénobites syriens*, 39ff.

⁴²Cf. G. Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1953–58), I, 19.

⁴³Cf. Peña, Castellana, and Fernández, *Les cénobites syriens*, 41.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 181ff.

⁴⁵H. C. Butler, *Early Churches in Syria* (Princeton, N.J., 1929), 50ff.

⁴⁶Cf. Peña, Castellana, and Fernández, *Les cénobites syriens*, 220.

⁴⁷Cf. H. Weiss, "Archaeology in Syria," *AJA* 98.1 (1994), 143–44.

the benches suggests that round table slabs were used in the refectory. This type of interior arrangement was also employed at St. Symeon's monastery in Egypt.

THE REFECTORIES OF ASIA MINOR

In the broader context of the Byzantine monastic world, Asia Minor played a significant role. In the fourth century, Basil the Great, later the bishop of Caesarea, had the most important impact on the development of the cenobitic communities in the Byzantine Empire, especially in Asia Minor.⁴⁸ His well-known "The Longer and the Shorter Rules" became the foundations of the development of Byzantine cenobitic life.⁴⁹ Unfortunately, St. Basil's Rules do not explicitly mention the monastic refectory, and we must look to a hagiographic text for literary evidence on early Anatolian refectories. The sixth-century Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon, who lived in Galatia and founded a monastery there, describes the commemorative meal held annually in his monastery on the Saturday when "the Ascension of Our Father-Lord Jesus-Christ was celebrated."⁵⁰ Unfortunately, the *vita* provides no information about the position and architecture of the refectory building, but it does state that the meal took place after the conclusion of the liturgy. In another region of Asia Minor, southeast of Iconium, the mountainous district called Kara Dagħ rises from the level Lycaonian plain and contains various ecclesiastical remains. On the site of Maden Sheher, known in the scholarly literature as Bin Bir Kilisse (Thousand and One Churches), a great number of monasteries once existed.⁵¹ According to the archaeological evidence, the earliest monastic structures in this region may be dated roughly to about the middle of the fifth and the early sixth centuries.⁵² In a secluded valley (on the Deghile site), several monasteries were gradually built. Founded probably at the beginning of the fifth century, some of them increased in size during the sixth and later centuries.⁵³ The refectory buildings were identified in only two sixth-century *koinobia* there.⁵⁴ In both monasteries, buildings were grouped around vast rectangular courts and included large halls serving as refectories. One of the refectories was an elongated rectangular hall with centrally arranged piers (Fig. 8a). Two square piers alternated with one cruciform pier. The cruciform piers carried transverse arches across the barrel vault.⁵⁵ This refectory has not survived in its entirety, as the eastern and most of the southern walls are missing. The building was located on the southwest side of the monastery, opposite the main church, but not very close to it. The reason for this distant location of the refectory is that the monastic complex, including the church, had several different building phases.⁵⁶ It is certain that the church and the rest of the buildings cannot be regarded as the product of a single comprehensive plan. Only archaeological excavation could bring to light the original arrangement of the buildings in the complex,

⁴⁸W. K. L. Clarke, *Basil the Great: The Ascetic Works of Saint Basil* (London, 1925); M. M. Wagner, *Saint Basil: Ascetical Works* (New York, 1950); Frazee, "Anatolian Asceticism," 16–33.

⁴⁹PG 31:905ff.

⁵⁰A. J. Festugière, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéon*, SubsHag 48 (Brussels, 1970), 88–89.

⁵¹Cf. W. M. Ramsay and G. L. Bell, *The Thousand and One Churches* (London, 1909).

⁵²*Ibid.*, 21–22.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 12–13.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 468ff.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 200ff.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 199ff.

and probably the location of an older church, with a different relationship to the refectory. In the other monastic settlement in the same region, the refectory had its customary location, near the church, on its west side.⁵⁷ The building was of an elongated rectangular plan, with a barrel vault and two ribbing arches springing from engaged piers (Fig. 8b). In the monastery of Alahan (late 5th century) in southern Anatolia, the church and the refectory that served the monastic community were placed in the eastern part of the monastery.⁵⁸ This location confirms the tradition of placing the refectory in the vicinity of the church building in yet another region of the Christian East.

A monastic center northeast of Miletos, situated on islands in the lake of Herakleia and on Mount Latros, was an important colony of monks from the tenth to the thirteenth century. Architectural remains of the monastic complexes there suggest that both *lavra* and *koinobion* types of settlements existed.⁵⁹ The monastic architecture of Latros still awaits study. Among the problems still to be resolved are the identification of refectories, their locations, architectural plans, and dating. The unusual feature of a T-shaped building with protruding apse was found in the complexes of Kellibaron, Stylos, Mersinet and on the island of Herakleia (Figs. 9, 10, 11a, b). This type of building has been variously interpreted in the scholarly literature as a refectory and as a chapel.⁶⁰ Without archaeological excavation and proper architectural analysis, it is difficult to come to a firm conclusion. On the basis of the existing plans it seems more likely that the building was a refectory rather than a chapel. The primary reason for this conclusion is that the apses of the buildings were not exclusively oriented toward the east, as they would be if they were chapels. Their locations within the complexes varied. In the monastic settlement on the island of Herakleia, the building was located on the west side of the complex, opposite the main church (Fig. 11a), that is, in the usual refectory position. In the complex at Stylos, the same type of building was placed on the south side of the main church, in its vicinity (Fig. 10). This could also be considered a typical refectory location. In the *lavra* of Kellibaron and in the complex at Mersinet, buildings probably to be identified as refectories were incorporated into the enclosure walls. At Mersinet, the main church building is not yet archaeologically defined (Fig. 11b), while in the *lavra* of Kellibaron several successive churches and chapels existed within the complex (Fig. 9). Bearing in mind that we are dealing with a *lavra* complex, it would not be surprising to expect the refectory building to have been located within the wider context of the monastic settlement. On the other hand, a T-plan for a refectory building is quite unusual in the Christian East. If we recall yet another unusual form—the tenth-century cruciform refectory plan from Mount Athos—we could envisage the possibility of similar architectural and functional developments in both environments, Mount Latros and Mount Athos.⁶¹ Un-

⁵⁷ Ibid., 221–29.

⁵⁸ M. Gough, "Alahan Monastery—Fourth Preliminary Report," *AnatSt* 17 (1967), 37–47. C. Mango postulated recently that Alahan was not a monastery at first, but a pilgrimage center: "Germia, a Postscript," *JÖB* 41 (1991), 297–300.

⁵⁹ Cf. T. Wiegand, *Der Latmos* (Berlin, 1913); R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin*, II: *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantins* (Paris, 1975), 217–50; A. Kirby and Z. Mercangöz, "The Monasteries of Mt. Latros and Their Architectural Development," in *Work and Worship at the Theotokos Evergetis, 1050–1200*, ed. M. Mullett and A. Kirby (Belfast, 1997), 51–77.

⁶⁰ R. Janin thought that T-shaped buildings could be refectories: *Les églises*, 221, 232, 238, 239. T. Wiegand interpreted the same buildings as chapels: *Der Latmos*, 17–24, 51–55, 61–69, 178–80.

⁶¹ On the cruciform refectory of the Great Lavra on Mount Athos, see further in this study.

fortunately, systematic archaeological research into the monastic complexes of Asia Minor has not been undertaken, thus creating a significant lacuna in our knowledge.⁶²

Research in another part of Asia Minor—Cappadocia—has provided relevant data about cenobitic communities in the tenth and later centuries.⁶³ The greatest concentration of monasteries is in the mountainous part of Cappadocia, where cave monasteries constituted a significant group. Especially important are the monastic complexes in the Göreme valley.

In recent scholarship, an entire group of Cappadocian monasteries have been given the name of “the Refectory Monasteries,” as the refectory was the most prominent feature, after the church, in the complex.⁶⁴ One of them is the eleventh-century Yusuf Koç Kilisesi monastery (Fig. 12a).⁶⁵ In the linear arrangement of the compartments of the cave complex, the refectory had a second position in a row of rooms, immediately after the church itself. The dining hall was rectangular; its front wall is now completely missing. The rock-cut furniture is the only remaining interior element. The position of the refectory clearly testifies to its significance for the community in both a spiritual and functional sense.

The group of small cave monastic complexes in the Göreme valley also had rock-cut refectories (Fig. 12b). The main characteristic of these rooms is the lack of exterior architectural articulation. The interior consisted of a rock-cut elongated rectangular space with rock-cut furniture on one side of the room. The long table in each refectory was flanked by benches. In some of the dining halls, frescoes have survived, as in Çarikli Kilise monastery.⁶⁶

The functional disposition of the refectory and its relation to the church in Cappadocian monasteries were similar to those in other regions of the Christian East. The refectory therefore, as elsewhere, was the most prominent space in the complex after the church itself.

THE REFECTORIES OF ARMENIA AND GEORGIA

The first cenobitic monasteries in Armenia were founded in the early fourth century. Monasticism developed there under the strong influence of Eustathius of Sebaste and of St. Basil the Great.⁶⁷ At the time of the great ecclesiastical leader Nerses, in the fourth century, monasticism flourished in Armenia. This was especially true in the region of

⁶²The newest scholarly literature is more relevant for churches than for monastic architecture; cf. S. Hill, “The Early Christian Churches of Cilicia” (Ph.D. diss., University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1984); T. A. Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey: An Architectural and Archaeological Survey*, 3 vols. (London, 1987–89); H. Hellenkemper, “Early Church Architecture in Southern Asia Minor,” in *Churches Built in Ancient Times*, ed. K. Painter (London, 1994), 213–38.

⁶³L. Rodley, *Cave Monasteries of Byzantine Cappadocia* (Cambridge, 1985).

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 151ff. It seems that a more appropriate name for this group of monasteries would be *koinobion* monasteries, as the main characteristic of the cenobitic community is the refectory.

⁶⁵Rodley, *Cave Monasteries*, 151–57.

⁶⁶Cf. N. Thierry, “Une iconographie inédite de la Cène dans un réfectoire rupestre de Cappadoce,” *REB* 33 (1975), 177–85.

⁶⁷Cf. N. G. Garsoïan, “Nersès le Grand, Basile de Césarée et Eustathe de Sébaste,” *Revue des études arméniennes* 17 (1983), 145–69.

Taron, where St. Kint was one of the founders of monasticism.⁶⁸ In addition to the communal way of life practiced in monasteries, there were also anchorites—holy men living in solitary communities in caves or in inaccessible rock-hewn caverns.⁶⁹ The earliest archaeological remains of Armenian monasteries date to the fifth century. Numerous sites where cenobitic life was practiced in the fifth and later centuries were in the course of time rebuilt, enlarged, or even replaced with new architectural constructions changing the original layout.⁷⁰ The refectories in these monasteries shared the same fate. Thus many of them date from the eleventh to the thirteenth century.⁷¹ One of the most important structural characteristics of Armenian refectory architecture was the system of vaulting with stone cross-arches, with openings at their apices, as in the Haghartzin refectory built in 1248.⁷² The refectory, located west of the complex of sacred buildings (Figs. 13, 14), was a spacious rectangular hall divided into two bays by two freestanding quadrangular piers placed in the center of the room. Each bay had a four-pitched roof with apex openings in its center. The use of stone as building material, as well as the distinctive construction technique and the internal stone decoration, constitute a specific, regional architectural development. Similar construction can be seen elsewhere in Armenia, as in the monastery of Halbat (10th–13th century).⁷³

Georgia, neighboring Armenia to the north, constitutes another distinctive region of the Christian East. Several refectories have survived there in monastery complexes ranging in date from the eighth to the tenth century.⁷⁴ In the monastery of Opiza, founded in 750, the refectory was located on the southwest side of the church. The building was covered with a barrel vault supported by transverse arches. According to an inscription found on the south wall of the eastern bay, the tenth-century founder of the refectory was Ašot IV Kuropalates.⁷⁵ A refectory has also been preserved in the south part of the complex of the eighth-century monastery in Hantz'a.⁷⁶ It was a vast rectangular hall divided into ten bays by a central row of four cruciform piers (Fig. 15).

In the mountainous regions of Georgia, in the cave monasteries of Udabno and Bertubani, two thirteenth-century refectories have survived.⁷⁷ Their plans and architectural settings resemble the refectories of Cappadocian cave monasteries. In Udabno (Fig. 16a) two longitudinal masonry tables have been preserved, while Bertubani had an axially placed table (Fig. 16b). The interiors of both dining halls were decorated with frescoes of which remains may still be seen on the walls. A variety of niches in the walls constitute part of the interior setting. One such niche at Bertubani was centrally placed facing the table and was a kind of apse.

⁶⁸Cf. G. Amadouni, "Le rôle historique des hiéromoines Arméniens," *OCA* 153 (1958), 279–305.

⁶⁹Cf. *The Epic Histories Attributed to P'awstos Buzand (Buzandazan Patmut'iwuk')*, ed. N. G. Garsoïan (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), 239, xvi.

⁷⁰Cf. P. Cuneo, *Architettura armena dal quattro al diciannovesimo secolo*, I (Rome, 1988), 744–49.

⁷¹S. Mnacakanjan, "I complessi monastici dell'Armenia medioevale," in *Atti del I Simposio Internazionale di Arte Armena* (Bergamo, 1975), 527–36; O. Khalpakhch'ian, "Arkhitektura armianskikh trapeznykh," *Arkhitekturnoe nasledstvo* 3 (1953), 130–47.

⁷²A. Zarian, *Haghartzin*, Documents of Armenian Architecture 13 (Milan, 1984), 9 and 38.

⁷³Cf. Cuneo, *Architettura armena*, 746 (147).

⁷⁴Cf. W. Djobadze, *Early Medieval Georgian Monasteries in Historic Tao, Klavjet'i, and Šavšet'i* (Stuttgart, 1992).

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 17ff.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 29ff.

⁷⁷Cf. A. Vol'skaja, *Rospisi srednevekovykh trapeznykh Gruzii* (Tbilisi, 1974).

Armenian and Georgian monastic refectories developed as part of wider Christian community practices under Byzantine influence. Apart from the regional character of their architectural solutions, their location relative to the church building and their interior decoration remained, as elsewhere in the Christian East, within the sacral context of their communities.

THE REFECTORIES OF CONSTANTINOPLE AND GREECE

The early developments of monastic refectories in the great urban centers of the Byzantine Empire, especially in Constantinople, unfortunately remain unknown. Future archaeological excavations of numerous urban monastic communities will be of crucial importance in that regard.

The close relationship between the church building and the refectory continued in later centuries, as can be seen on Mount Athos, where St. Athanasius founded the Great Lavra in the tenth century. Here a cruciform refectory faces the triconch church in the most direct manner, both buildings being arranged on the same east-west axis (Fig. 17).⁷⁸ According to the written sources, Athanasius built the Lavra refectory with twenty white marble tables at each of which twelve monks could be seated.⁷⁹ The central position of the church within the *koinobion* was not Athanasius' invention, but the placement of the *trapeza* directly facing the main church portal was probably his contribution. The Great Lavra represents a developed model of Byzantine *koinobion* that became a paradigm for most Athonite monasteries and monasteries elsewhere within the Byzantine sphere of influence, where refectories were typically located in the western part of the enclosure, near the church. The most striking parallel to Athos is found in the fourteenth-century Serbian monastery of the Holy Archangels near Prizren, a foundation of Tzar Stefan Dušan. The cruciform refectory there, with its location on the west side opposite the main church, was definitely based on the Great Lavra model.⁸⁰

The longer west arm of the cruciform Lavra refectory terminated in an apse, resembling that of the *katholikon* (Fig. 18). The structural form of the building followed the plan, as the vast hall was covered with a cruciform wooden trussed roof. The main entrance, perhaps tripartite and monumental, faced the main entrance to the church.⁸¹ The spatial disposition of the refectory and its architectural design emphasize the strong interrelation between these two buildings within the monastic complex.

In the eleventh century in the monastery of Hosios Loukas, a monumental refectory was built on the south side of the *katholikon* (Fig. 19a).⁸² The *trapeza* was a vast single-aisled hall with an apse at its east end. Two-light windows were placed along its longitudinal walls. The main tripartite entrance was in the western short wall. No traces of table masonry were found, but it has been proposed that a single axially placed longitudinal dining table once existed.⁸³ The masonry was a combination of brick and stone, while the semicircular arches forming the windows were of brick alone. With regard to its

⁷⁸Cf. P. M. Mylonas, "La trapéza de la Grande Lavra au Mont Athos," *CahArch* 35 (1987), 143–57.

⁷⁹*Vitae duae antiquae Sancti Athanasii Athonitae*, ed. J. Noret (Louvain, 1982), Vita B, chap. 25, 20–25.

⁸⁰Cf. Popović, *Krst*, 262–64.

⁸¹Cf. Mylonas, "La trapéza," 152.

⁸²E. G. Stikas, *To oikodomikon chronikon tes Mones Hosiou Louka Phokidos* (Athens, 1970), 209ff.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 210, fig. 103.

building technique and architectural decoration, the refectory of Hosios Loukas had many similarities with its *katholikon*. The proximity of the refectory to the main church stressed the spatial and functional relation between these two buildings.

Another eleventh-century Byzantine monastic refectory with a plan similar to Hosios Loukas was at Nea Moni on Chios, where the dining hall was located on the southwest side of the *katholikon*.⁸⁴ The *trapeza* has not survived in its original architectural form, as it was rebuilt several times over the course of centuries.⁸⁵ The plan of the refectory, the masonry table, and the eastern apse are the original elements still preserved within its structural fabric. The dining hall was an elongated, single-aisled rectangular building, covered by a barrel vault and terminating in a semicircular apse on the east side (Fig. 19b). The interior articulation is dominated by a large constructed table placed along its longitudinal axis and flanked by longitudinal benches on both sides. The surface of the table was entirely covered by marble slabs of simple geometric shapes. Similarity in the locations of the refectories at Hosios Loukas and Nea Moni points to an established model within a wider monastic community, with a fixed relationship between the church and the *trapeza*.

The Byzantine monastic compound on the island of Patmos dedicated to St. John the Theologian was established in the eleventh century. The founder of the monastery, Christodoulos, built a complex that his successors enlarged significantly in the course of its history.⁸⁶ The twelfth-century refectory, placed close to the church complex on the southeastern side, was an elongated, single-aisled rectangular hall with an irregular apse at its north end. This hall was intersected in the middle of its east side by another bay that also terminated in a semicircular apse, but was divided from the main hall by a solid stone wall with a door leading into the apsidal space (Fig. 20a). The masonry tables were placed along the longitudinal axis of the room. The main entrance was on the west side of the dining hall, providing easy communication with the entrance to the *katholikon*. In the structural articulation of the building, two phases are present. In the first building period the refectory apparently had a wooden roof, replaced in the later medieval period by a domed construction over the middle portion of the building. The dome rested on the vaults along the north-south axis and on the east and west arches. The upper vaulting construction was supported by lateral blind arches that bear the remains of the first layer of the original wall painting. The second layer of frescoes survives in the dome and on the vaults. The style of the frescoes suggests that they date to the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries for their two successive phases.⁸⁷ The interior setting and the disposition of the apse reveal the emphasis placed on the tripartite northern apsidal arrangement. The centrally placed table in front of the great northern apse must have been reserved for the *hegoumenos* of the monastery or for other ecclesiastical dignitaries.

Eleventh-century Byzantine refectories in the monasteries of Daphni, Hosios Meletios (Fig. 20b), and elsewhere in the empire use an architectural solution similar to that

⁸⁴Cf. C. Bouras, *Nea Moni on Chios: History and Architecture* (Athens, 1982), 168ff.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 170.

⁸⁶A. K. Orlandos, *He architektonike kai hai byzantinai toichographiai tes Mones tou Theologou Patmou* (Athens, 1970); E. Kollias, *Patmos: Mosaic Wall Paintings* (Athens, 1986), 24–35; *Patmos: Treasures of the Monastery*, ed. A. D. Kominis (Athens, 1988).

⁸⁷Cf. Orlandos, *He architektonike*, 93–103, 175–272; Kollias, *Patmos*, 24ff.

at Nea Moni.⁸⁸ In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Mount Papikion in the Rhodope region of Thrace became a significant monastic center.⁸⁹ Recent archaeological excavations there have brought to light a monastic complex situated close to the village of Sostis.⁹⁰ The refectory excavated there was located on the west side of the complex, opposite the *katholikon* and its main western portal. The building had an elongated rectangular plan, with a semicircular protruding apse on its north side (Fig. 21a). With regard to the refectory location and plan, the monastery on Mount Papikion utilized the same architectural model as elsewhere in the empire. It seems that from the late ninth to the eleventh and twelfth centuries refectory building throughout the empire became codified: a long hall, most often without an aisle and terminating in an apse. In the twelfth century on Mount Athos, the refectory in the monastery of Chilandar used the same model.⁹¹ Its location to the west of the *katholikon*, with the entrance facing the main western portal of the esonarthex, resembles the spatial relations encountered at the Great Lavra. The Chilandar *trapeza* was an elongated, aisleless hall with an apse that is semicircular on the inside and polygonal on the exterior at its north end (Fig. 21b). The articulation of its main east facade can be reconstructed from the scattered remains of the original two-light windows in the lower zone and the alternating blind arches and single-light openings in the upper zone. In the interior, marble tables of the same semicircular type (*sigmata*) as in the Great Lavra existed until the eighteenth century, when they were replaced with wooden ones.⁹² Remnants of thirteenth-century wall decoration are preserved in the upper zone of the north tympanum, today hidden from view above the modern ceiling.⁹³

In the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries in Mistra, refectories continued to be built on the same plan, as can be seen in the monastery of Brontochion.⁹⁴ Located south of the main church, as at Hosios Loukas or Nea Moni, the refectory here was a single-aisled elongated hall with an apse at its east end (Fig. 22a). Lateral north and south walls also have semicircular niches paralleling the arches. The main north facade facing the church was articulated by pilasters on the exterior.

THE REFECTORIES OF SERBIA AND BULGARIA

The architectural refectory types established in Byzantine monasteries spread north into the Balkans from the tenth century on. The kingdoms of Serbia and Bulgaria, Christian states that developed under strong Byzantine influence, established their monastic

⁸⁸ For a survey of the monastic refectories in Greece, cf. A. K. Orlandos, *Monasteriake architektonike*, 2nd ed. (Athens, 1958), 43–60.

⁸⁹ P. Soustal, *Thrakien (Thrace, Rodope und Haimimontos)*, TIB 6 (Vienna, 1991), 386–87.

⁹⁰ Cf. N. Zikos, "Apotelesmata anaskaphikon ereunon sto Papikion oros," *ByzF* 14.1 (1989), 677–93; *ByzF* 14.2 (1989), pls. CCLVI–CCLXXX.

⁹¹ Cf. S. Nenadović, "Jedna hipoteza o arhitekturi hilendarske trpezarije," *Zbornik zaštite spomenika kulture* 14 (1963), 1–11.

⁹² V. G. Barskii, *Vtoroe poseshchenie Sv. Afonskoi gory* (St. Petersburg, 1887), 41.

⁹³ Cf. V. Djurić, "La peinture de Chilandar à l'époque du roi Milutin," *Hilandarski zbornik* 4 (1978), 31–64, esp. 41–62.

⁹⁴ G. Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra* (Paris, 1910), esp. pl. 16.2.

communities within the Byzantine monastic context. The monastic colony of the Holy Mountain of Athos made an especially important impact throughout the Balkans.

The refectory in the monastery of Djurdjevi Stupovi in Serbia dates from the late twelfth century.⁹⁵ Located south of the church, it was planned as a long rectangular hall with an apse at its short east wall (Fig. 22b). Recent archaeological excavations have revealed the original stone frames of the two-light windows, together with stone window colonnettes and Romanesque capitals. The exterior wall decoration of the refectory resembles the similar decorative solution found on the church building.

Not far from Djurdjevi Stupovi survives the compound of the Studenica monastery with a monumental refectory from the twelfth century (Fig. 23a). At this foundation of the Nemanjić dynasty, the archbishop Sava drew his ideas from several older monastic complexes. For example, the great dining hall was situated west of the main *katholikon* as in the Athonite communities.⁹⁶ The single-aisled, long hall was equipped with two rows of *sigmata* of the Mount Athos type and of Byzantine style (Fig. 23b).

In the thirteenth-century monastic foundation at Sopoćani, another great dining hall is worth noting.⁹⁷ Located northwest of the main church, the refectory entrance faced the main western church entrance (Fig. 24a). In King Milutin's foundation, the monastery of St. Stephen in Banjska, the refectory was also located on the west side of the complex, facing the *katholikon*.⁹⁸ Built in alternating stone and brick courses, characteristic of Byzantine-Constantinopolitan construction, the refectory had two rows of stone tables with side benches (Fig. 24b). In the niches on the longitudinal west wall, remains of fresco painting were found.

The most interesting refectory in medieval Serbia is that discovered at the Holy Archangels monastery near Prizren, a fourteenth-century foundation of Tzar Stefan Dušan.⁹⁹ The cruciform refectory here, as already mentioned, is definitely of the Great Lavra type (Fig. 25).

On the territory of the First Bulgarian Empire, a great number of monasteries were founded in the late ninth and tenth centuries, most of them concentrated in or around the urban centers of Pliska and Preslav. One of the most prominent monastic centers was at Patleina—the monastery of St. Panteleimon.¹⁰⁰ Founded and built between the late ninth and early tenth centuries, Patleina had a refectory situated on the south side of the complex (Fig. 26a). It was an elongated rectangular building divided into three compartments without an apse. At Great Preslav, on the site of Tuzlalaka, another monastic community was founded in the late ninth to early tenth century.¹⁰¹ Over the course of time, in the later medieval epoch, the monastery, and especially the church, were rebuilt. On

⁹⁵ Cf. Popović, *Krst*, 242ff.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 243.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 250ff.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 255ff.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 262ff.

¹⁰⁰ J. S. Gospodinov, "Razkopki v Patlejna," *Izvestiia na bulgarskiiia arkheologicheski institut*, BAN 4 (1914), 113–28; S. Vaklinov, *Formirane na starobulgarskata kultura VI–XI vek* (Sofia, 1977), 204ff; N. Čaneva-Dečevska, *Curkvi i manastiri ot Veliki Preslav* (Sofia, 1980), 140ff.

¹⁰¹ Vaklinov, *Formirane*, 206ff; Čaneva-Dečevska, *Curkvi*, 136ff; T. Totev, *Manastirut v "Tuzlalaka"—Centur na risuvana keramika v Preslav prez IX–X v.*, *Razkopki i proučvanija* 8 (Sofia, 1982), 5–78.

the southeast side of the complex a great cruciform building was constructed (Fig. 26b). It is not yet clear from the archaeological data whether this building served as the refectory or perhaps as the residence of the *hegoumenos*.¹⁰² If it is a refectory, it would reflect the impact of Mount Athos in the northern Balkans, illustrating the tradition of the Great Lavra model.

In the twelfth-century monastery in the region of Kurdžali, a refectory was excavated on the east side of the church.¹⁰³ It was a single-aisled long hall with an apse on its south side (Fig. 27a). The refectory in the monastery of St. John of Rila within the urban center of Turnovo utilized a similar architectural plan.¹⁰⁴ Located on the southeast side of the church, the refectory had an apse that was semicircular on the interior, while its exterior articulation was polygonal (Fig. 27b).

The early-fourteenth-century dining hall in the monastery at Apollonia (in Albania) had an unusual triconch plan.¹⁰⁵ The refectory was located in the west part of the complex (Fig. 27c). The main entrance to the dining room faced the main entrance to the church. The interior of the building was decorated with frescoes. The three facades were articulated with small apses of stone and brick. The upper zones of the walls were executed in the cloisonné technique with two vertical bricks separating blocks of stone. The different building techniques visible on its walls suggest that the refectory was remodeled several times during the medieval era.

All the relevant data lead to the conclusion that the most popular Byzantine model for refectories was articulated on Mount Athos, penetrated into the northern Balkans during the time of Byzantine rule, and remained there in the subsequent period of the establishment of national states.

CONCLUSION

Analysis of the architecture of monastic refectories of the Christian East, and especially of the Byzantine world, points first of all to a continuous adaptation of an architectural model without much change in terms of its general spatial and architectural disposition. This is evident primarily in the location of the *trapeza* relative to the church, as well as in its plan, which is usually rectangular, often with an apse at one of its shorter ends. The main exceptions to this formula are the cruciform refectories of the Great Lavra on Mount Athos and of the Holy Archangels in Serbia. A variation of this design may also be seen in the triconch refectory of the medieval monastery near ancient Apollonia in Albania.

If we compare the locations of the refectories of the Byzantine world, we can identify

¹⁰² Cf. Vaklinov, *Formirane*, 204–5; N. Tuleškov, *Arhitektura na Bulgarskite manastiri* (Sofia, 1988), 160ff.

¹⁰³ N. Ovčarov and D. Hadžieva, *Srednovekovnijat manastir v Gr. Kurdžali—Centur na episkopijata Ahridos (XI–XIV v.)*, Razkopki i proučvanija 24 (Sofia, 1992).

¹⁰⁴ Tuleškov, *Arhitektura*, 163ff.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. A. Meksi, “Deux constructions du type à trois conques” (French résumé), *Monumentet* 7–8 (1974), 229–46; H. and H. Buschhausen, *Die Marienkirche von Apollonia in Albanien: Byzantiner, Normannen und Serben im Kampf um die Via Egnatia* (Vienna, 1976); J. J. Yiannias, “The Palaeologan Refectory Program at Apollonia,” in *The Twilight of Byzantium*, ed. S. Ćurčić and D. Mouriki (Princeton, N.J., 1991), 161–74; G. Reshat, “L’architecture des monastères byzantins et postbyzantins en Albanie,” *CorsiRav* 40 (1993), 505–18, esp. 539 and fig. 6.

several general characteristics. Some were built as part of a complex of buildings and incorporated into a group next to the main monastic church, most commonly in Egypt. Another spatial solution was the placement of the refectory as a freestanding building related to the church but not physically joined to it, as in certain examples in Palestine, Syria, the Balkans, and Armenia. Yet other refectories were independent buildings incorporated into the monastery enclosure wall; there are some examples in Palestine, but this type is most frequently encountered in Byzantine monasteries in the Balkans and in later monasteries of the Slavic states in the same region. A freestanding refectory in the central zone of the monastic complex, opposite the *katholikon* on its west side, was a Mount Athos tradition, probably invented in the tenth century at the Great Lavra. The Lavra model made a strong impact on the rest of Mount Athos. This is particularly evident in the location of the *trapeza* on the west side of the church, and less so in its architectural plan. Over the course of time in some Athonite complexes, refectories were adapted or even remodeled, using the Lavra dining hall as a specific model (e.g., Vatopedi, Dionysiou, Docheiariou).¹⁰⁶

Analysis of the spatial disposition and the locations of monastic refectories does not indicate a single universal model applicable to all pertinent *koinobia* of the Christian East. But at the same time it is possible to discern certain constant characteristics, especially from the point of view of the physical relationship of the *trapeza* to the church. Whether freestanding or not, the refectory was always related to the church or the relevant sacred space of the monastery. In some cases, dining halls were juxtaposed with the main monastic church, in others with a burial cave or a funerary chapel (as in some examples in Syria).

Further architectural and structural analysis of refectories could be pursued in two directions: architectural layout and structural disposition. In a general sense, a plan with a number of common characteristics was adopted on a wider scale in the Christian East. Three main architectural solutions can be recognized: a single-aisled elongated hall, a basilican plan, and a vast rectangular room divided into bays by means of pilasters or axially placed rows of piers or columns. These commonly adopted models spread through all the regions of the Byzantine Empire and through the Christian East in general.

The cruciform and T-shaped refectory plans were quite unusual and became typical only on Mount Athos, probably on Mount Latros in Asia Minor, and in the Balkans. Another planning feature of refectories that was not evenly spread through the entire area in question was the apsidal termination. In Egypt, Palestine, and parts of Syria, protruding semicircular apses are not found,¹⁰⁷ but interior semicircular niches were occasionally found, whereas they could be an element of the plan in Armenia. In contrast, in the central regions of Asia Minor and in the Balkans, especially during the middle Byzantine period, the apse became one of the common elements of a refectory plan. The lack of archaeological data for the early periods in Constantinople and its vicinity, as well as for the monastic centers of Bithynia or Pontus, makes it impossible to

¹⁰⁶A great number of the Athonite refectories were remodeled in the late Byzantine or even post-Byzantine period. For the comparative analysis of their plans, see Mylonas, "La trapéza," 146–47.

¹⁰⁷In the St. Symeon monastery and elsewhere in Egypt. In Armenia in the 12th–14th centuries, the refectories lacked apses.

reach a firm conclusion in this regard for these regions. Keeping in mind later developments in the Christian East, one can speculate that apsidal construction was not characteristic in Egypt and Palestine. On the other hand, in the monastic complexes of the empire in the Balkans, an apse was a prominent feature of the plan. As monastic development in Constantinople was influenced by the great monastic centers in Asia Minor, one can suggest that apsidal refectories may have been common in early monasteries in Constantinople and its vicinity.

Contemporary palace architecture no doubt had an impact on refectory architecture. The *Dekaenneakoubita*—the banqueting hall with the nineteen couches within the Great Palace of the Byzantine emperors, restored in the tenth century in the time of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos—was a long hall terminated by an apse and with nine vaulted niches on either side.¹⁰⁸ Ceremonial features present in the banqueting halls of imperial residences¹⁰⁹ had wider Christian architectural implications.

The conclusion may be proposed that a monastic refectory building (*trapeza*) of the middle and late Byzantine periods was an apsidal elongated hall, adopted as a general model in the capital and its neighboring regions, as well as in the Balkans.

Regional elements are more discernible in monastic refectories with regard to structural composition and architectural design. As in the case of churches, the most common building materials for refectories were stone or stone and brick, depending on the regional resources. Structural articulation, especially of the upper zones and the roof, was determined by regional building practices. Barrel vaults strengthened by transverse arches were widespread, especially in Egypt, but also in other regions of the Christian East. Vaulting of bays with low hemispherical domes without drums was also common in Egypt. Similar construction methods, but marked by regional execution, occurred in Armenia. Refectories there often had special vaulting over individual bays, featuring apex openings in the central part of each bay. Barrel vaults with transverse arches were also popular in the southern regions of the Balkans. Wooden roofs were in use simultaneously with vaulting. The basilical refectory in the monastery of St. Martyrius in Palestine had a wooden roof, as did the cruciform refectory of the Great Lavra on Mount Athos.¹¹⁰ Monastic refectories in the Balkans had mostly wooden roofs.¹¹¹

The external sculptural decoration of refectories in general also had regional significance and regional characteristics. Egyptian monastic refectories lacked any external sculptural decoration. Refectories in Syria and Armenia were made of cut stone ashlar using the same building techniques as the churches. Exterior sculptural decoration was stressed in the articulation of the main refectory portals in Armenia.¹¹² In Byzantine monastic centers of the tenth and later centuries, refectories were often built of stone or of stone and brick in a polychrome technique similar to that used in churches. If one compares the architecture of refectories and churches, one is struck by certain similarities

¹⁰⁸Cf. C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453*, Sources and Documents (Toronto, 1986), 208, 210.

¹⁰⁹N. Oikonomidès, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IX^e et X^e siècles* (Paris, 1972).

¹¹⁰For the wooden roof of the refectory at St. Martyrius, see Hirschfeld, *Desert Monasteries*, 193. For the wooden roof construction in the Great Lavra refectory, see Mylonas, "La trapéza," 150ff.

¹¹¹Cf. Popović, *Krst*, 242ff.

¹¹²As in the monastic refectory in Haghartzin and elsewhere.

between their formal features. Though the two buildings relied on different architectural solutions, this did not affect the individual elements. Similarities also exist in the selection of secondary sculptural and decorative elements, though these were generally much more elaborate in churches, as can be seen in the monastery of Hosios Loukas and elsewhere.

Another characteristic of architectural design was the system of measurements according to which the buildings were erected. The measuring and design of religious buildings have often been a subject of study, particularly the proportional aspects of design. These include the familiar methods of quadrature and triangulation. Monastery refectories also conformed to certain design modules that were employed in order to determine their overall dimensions.¹¹³

The interior articulation of a *trapeza* was marked by the arrangement of tables and the fresco decoration on its walls. Two principal solutions to the seating arrangement have been noted. In the first case, two rows of tables parallel the main axis, while three separate tables were in front of the apse.¹¹⁴ The other solution employed a single continuous elongated dining table placed in the center along the main axis.¹¹⁵ Very often tables were built with stone slabs providing the dining surface. One of the shorter sides of the table slab often ended in a semicircle when there were two rows of tables (Fig. 28a), or both ends were shaped identically if a single table was employed (Fig. 28b, c). The table design in which one end is curved has been termed the *sigma table* type (Fig. 28d).¹¹⁶ The iconographic program of surviving refectory fresco decoration emphasized the Last Supper, but also featured the figures of monastic saints and scenes from the christological cycle, and the Menologion, as has been shown in several studies by J. Yiannias.¹¹⁷ It is interesting to note that “when the nunnery of the Theotokos of Maroules in Constantinople was converted to use by monks, the frescoes of female saints that adorned the refectory were replaced with images of male saints.”¹¹⁸

In considering the meaning and function of the *trapeza* in the monastic environment, one must deal with several different factors: the position of the building in the overall iconographic concept of the *koinobion* enclosure, its architectural type, its interior arrangement and fresco decoration, and, above all, the ritual performed in connection with meals. It is known from the written sources—the monastic rules or *typika*—that commu-

¹¹³For the design modules of the refectories, see Popović, *Krst*, 366–67.

¹¹⁴This arrangement of tables is characteristic for Mount Athos and the Balkans in general.

¹¹⁵The use of a single long table was widespread in the refectories of Egypt, Cappadocia, and Georgia, but also in the region of Chios, on Patmos.

¹¹⁶Cf. J. Strzygowski, “Der Sigmaförmige Tüsch und der älteste Typus des Refektoriums,” in *Wörter und Sachen*, I (Heidelberg, 1909), 70–80; L. Hibbard Loomis, “The Table of the Last Supper in Religious and Secular Iconography,” *Art Studies* 5 (1927), 71–88; O. Nussbaum, “Zum Problem der runden und Sigmaförmigen Altarplatten,” *JbAC* 4 (1961), 18–43; K. Gamber, *Domus Ecclesiae* (Regensburg, 1968), 37 and 78ff. On the refectory tables, cf. Orlandos, *Monasteriaka*, 52, figs. 65–67.

¹¹⁷J. J. Yiannias, “The Wall Paintings in the Trapeza of the Great Lavra on Mount Athos: A Study in Eastern Orthodox Refectory Art” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1971); idem, “The Elevation of the Panaghia,” *DOP* 26 (1972), 225–36; idem, “The Palaeologan Refectory Program,” 161–74; idem, “The Refectory Paintings of Mount Athos: An Interpretation,” in *The Byzantine Tradition after the Fall of Constantinople* (Charlottesville, Va.-London, 1991), 269–309.

¹¹⁸Cf. A.-M. Talbot, “A Comparison of the Monastic Experience of Byzantine Men and Women,” *GOTR* 30–31 (1985), 8.

nal meals were ceremonial rituals organized in accordance with strict regulations.¹¹⁹ The refectory semandron sounded to signal the beginning of the ritual, followed by the solemn entrance procession and the seating of church dignitaries—the *hegoumenos* and the high-ranking clergy who occupied seats of honor. The ritual also included special prayers and readings from Scripture or other edifying texts during the meals.¹²⁰ Very little written data about refectory rules are preserved from the early days of monasticism.¹²¹ However, it is certain that communal refectories existed not only in *koinobia* but in *lavrai* as well, for weekly gatherings of the brethren.

In several scholarly works the origin of the architectural form of the *trapeza* has been traced back to late antiquity and the early Byzantine type of triclinium.¹²² Formal similarities do exist in the plan of the building, and the table types were also similar, judging from some archaeological finds.¹²³ Differences can be found, however, in the articulation of triclinia of the respective periods. The dining space of late antique triclinia was often visually connected, even physically open, to the neighboring *nymphaea*, garden settings or atria, which formed an integral part of the environment in which a meal took place.¹²⁴ Just the opposite was true of the *koinobion trapeza*: it was a closed space, focused exclusively on its interior setting, with hardly any communication with the external environment. A limited number of windows on refectory walls admitted a scant amount of light. In addition, the participants in the meal were forbidden to engage in any conversation. They had to focus on their prescribed meal and listen to the voice of a chosen brother reading from Scripture or another appropriate text.

Bearing in mind all these facts, one must look to another ritual performed in the early days of Christianity—the funeral banquet—as a source of the form of the refectory building and its ritual. This banquet was the *agape* performed in connection with the feasts of the martyrs; the *mensa-coemeterium* of the early Christians, arranged in the form of vast basilical halls, was the site where these commemorative meals were celebrated.¹²⁵ Sigma-shaped *mensae* have been archaeologically confirmed in numerous Early Christian cemetery sites spread throughout the vast Christian East and West.¹²⁶ They constituted the physical part of a funerary ritual that was performed near the graves of both average

¹¹⁹Cf. *Le typikon de la Théotokos Évergétis*, ed. P. Gautier (Paris, 1982) [= *REB* 40 (1982)], 1–101, esp. 33.9ff; *Le typikon du Christ Sauveur Pantocrator*, ed. P. Gautier (Paris, 1974) [= *REB* 32 (1974)], 47.291ff, and in many other monastic *typika*. Concerning refectory rules in the 18th century, cf. Barskii, *Vtoroe poseshchenie*, 73–76 and fig. 18.

¹²⁰Cf. *Pachomian Koinonia*, ed. Veilleux, II, 151.37.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, 150.29–34, 151.35–37.

¹²²I. Lavin, “The House of the Lord: Aspects of the Role of Palace Triclinia in the Architecture of Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages,” *ArtB* 44 (1962), 1–27; L. Bek, “Questiones Convivales: The Idea of the Triclinium and the Staging of Convivial Ceremony from Rome to Byzantium,” *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici* 12 (1983), 81–107; Mylonas, “La trapéza,” 143–45.

¹²³Cf. J.-P. Sodini, “L’habitat urbain en Grèce à la veille des invasions,” in *Villes et peuplement dans l’Illyricum protobyzantin*, Collection de l’École française (Rome, 1984), esp. 375–83.

¹²⁴Cf. Bek, “Triclinium,” 86ff.

¹²⁵Cf. R. Krautheimer, “Mensa-coemeterium-martyrium,” in *Studies in Early Christian, Medieval and Renaissance Art* (New York, 1969), 35–58.

¹²⁶Cf. P. Sanmartin Moro and P. Palol, “Necropolis paleocristiana de Cartagena,” in *Actas del VIII Congreso Internacional de Arqueología Cristiana* (Barcelona, 1972), 447–58; X. Barral i Altet, “Mensae et repas funéraire dans les nécropoles d’époque chrétienne de la péninsule Ibérique: Vestiges archéologiques,” in *Atti del IX Congresso Internazionale di Arqueologia Cristiana*, II (Rome, 1978), 49–69; K. F. Kadra, “Rapport sur les découvertes en Algérie,” in *Actes du XIe Congrès International d’Archéologie Chrétienne*, II (Rome, 1989), 1961–67.

mortals and martyrs. Stone slabs, either circular or sigma-shaped, used as dining surfaces for that type of commemorative meal, resembled the later tables built for refectories (Fig. 29). The refectory in the St. Symeon monastery in Egypt, for example, had circular table slabs arranged in two rows. A similar disposition and shape of tables were recently found in the early Byzantine monastic complex at Tell Bi'a in Syria. Later, in the tenth century, the Mount Athos *trapeza* used the same table type.

Going back to the monastic refectory and its meaning, there are reasons for stressing its commemorative character. If one recalls the location of the early refectory buildings in the monasteries of Egypt and Syria, or in Palestinian *koinobia*, one notes that they were commonly located in close relation to burial caves and were connected to either the church or a chapel by an appropriate pathway or corridor. In middle and late Byzantine monasteries the refectory was located near the church, usually in the western part of the enclosure, and oriented toward the church narthex. According to surviving monastic rules, after prayers in the narthex, monks or nuns would proceed to the refectory as a closing part of the ritual.¹²⁷ It is well known that one of the narthex functions was funerary, providing the setting for the tombs of the donor and his family and sometimes church dignitaries. According to some *typika*, the *pannychis* (nocturnal vigil) was also performed there.¹²⁸ Several Byzantine *typika* indicate that all commemorations involved the refectory, as they always included an obligatory meal.¹²⁹ In the Life of Lazarus the Galesiote (11th century), we read how a monk chose the sacred space of a refectory in which to die: "And he came out to the refectory—for it was there that he slept on the ground . . . in the place in which there are holy images of the Theotokos and Archangel Michael stretching out (their arms) in supplication to the Savior, and quietly surrendered his soul to God."¹³⁰

Unfortunately, most of the early refectory fresco programs have not survived. Their traces can be gleaned only through the scattered descriptions in travelogues that bear witness to a certain continuity with later programs from the fourteenth century and even from the post-Byzantine era.¹³¹ Some of the iconographic programs in refectories have close links with those in church narthexes, as has been noted by H. Brockhaus and Yiannias.¹³² I do not intend to argue that refectory programs did not change and develop in the course of time. The same evolution appears in church decoration that reflected the elaboration of liturgical functions related to certain parts of the church, but this did not change their ultimate purpose. Instead, it only gave them new, additional layers of meaning.

Bearing in mind all available data, one can conclude that the *koinobion trapeza* belongs

¹²⁷Cf. *Typ. Évergétis*, ed. Gautier, 33.9–337ff; *Typ. Pantocrator*, ed. Gautier, 47.300–305.

¹²⁸Cf. M. Arranz, "Les prières presbytérales de la 'pannychis' de l'ancien euchologe byzantin et la 'panikhida' des défunts," in *La maladie et la mort du chrétien dans la liturgie* (Rome, 1975), 31–82.

¹²⁹Cf. *Typ. Évergétis*, ed. Gautier, 77.1080ff; "Le typikon du Sébaste Grégoire Pakourianos," ed. P. Gautier, *REB* 42 (1984), 97.1290ff; "Le typikon de la Théotokos Kécharitôménè," ed. P. Gautier, *REB* 43 (1985), 119.71ff.

¹³⁰*Synaxarium CP*, col. 560E. The quoted text is a translation by P. Topping in A. Cutler, "Under the Sign of the Deesis: On the Question of Representativeness in Medieval Art and Literature," *DOP* 41 (1987), 147.

¹³¹Cf. *Ruy Gonzáles de Clavijo, Embassy to Tamerlane, 1403–1406*, ed. G. Le Strange (London, 1928), 64, 67, 69ff; Stephen of Novgorod (in his journey to Constantinople in 1348 or 1349) visited the refectory of the Studite monastery: cf. G. P. Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Washington, D.C., 1984), 41.

¹³²H. Brockhaus, *Die Kunst in den Athos-Klöstern*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1924), 84; Yiannias, "The Refectory Paintings," 279.

to the sacred rather than to the secular buildings of a monastery.¹³³ Its architectural form originated from the vast basilical halls of late antiquity, though not exclusively from triclinia. Parallels can be found in church buildings of the period, which evolved from the familiar forms of pagan basilicas, but also from other architectural structures found within imperial palaces.¹³⁴

From the early communities to the late Byzantine period, the refectory locations within the monastic complex always had a special relation to the main monastic church or a relevant chapel. Sometimes, as in Egypt, refectories were physically joined to the church buildings. Their spatial disposition in the monasteries of the respective periods of the Christian East and Byzantium can be considered as a constant feature of the *koinobion* spatial iconography. The refectory was always the most prominent building after the church in the monastic settlement. Its architectural articulation, especially in middle and late Byzantine developments, contains certain decorative features reminiscent of the monastic church with which it is associated. This confirms an interaction between the two buildings at the secondary level of architectural elements as well. The interior decoration of refectories, whose walls were covered with religious images, makes these correlations even closer. However, the refectory is not a church, being distinguished from the latter in its meaning and function. It can be considered as a bifunctional building: regular meals were served there as well as commemorative feasts. Analyzing fresco programs in Byzantine monastic refectories, Yiannias summarized their meaning in the form of a proposition: "The Incarnation of the second Person of the Trinity, effected through the Theotokos, has made possible our salvation, for which we on our part must practice self-denial."¹³⁵ This proposition was closely connected to the ascetic spirit of monasticism in Byzantium and in the Christian East in general. There a meal has always been a crucial moment in tracing a path to ultimate salvation. Another aspect also—commemoration—characterized the refectory procedure. Strict hierarchy in seating the monastic dignitaries at the dining table was observed there, as a part of the refectory regulations. During the meal, appropriate prayers were recited constantly. For the important Christian feasts, special prayers and special foods were prescribed for the refectory.¹³⁶ In other words, the *trapeza* was used for the daily commemorative meal in remembrance of Christian saints and martyrs, and above all for the commemoration of "Our Lord who made our salvation possible," the reminder of which the monks bore witness to permanently, especially through the annual great feasts. The way of performing the commemoration in that sense was charted long before in the early days of Christianity through the commemorative meal held at Christian graves. The interior appearance of the refectory with its fresco program and rows of sigma-shaped tables originated in the Early Christian ritual connected with funerary banquets. This brings into focus one of the refectory's principal functions, commemoration.

The monasticism of the Christian East and of the Byzantine world was focused on self-denial, mortification of the flesh, a strict daily regime, continuous prayers, and pre-

¹³³The refectory was wrongly classified as a secular building in Hirschfeld, *Desert Monasteries*, 190ff.

¹³⁴S. Ćurčić, "Church and Palace: Did Form Follow Function in Late Antique and Byzantine Architecture?" (forthcoming).

¹³⁵Yiannias, "The Refectory Paintings," 288.

¹³⁶"Typ. Kécharitôménè," 93.46–47ff.

scribed commemorations as the means of salvation. The monastery church was the place where the liturgy was performed and the Eucharist celebrated. The *koinobion* refectory, on the other hand, was the place where commemorative meals were served. Finally, its spatial position in the *koinobion* close to the main church, or ideally placed on the same axis with the church, clearly testifies to the fact that the two buildings provided a joint setting for an integral monastic ritual that began in the church and ended in the *koinobion trapeza*.

Greenbelt, Md.